

# RELIGIOUS RESISTANCE

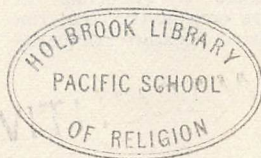
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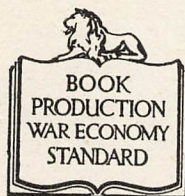
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WOKING



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## THE BEGINNING OF THE STRUGGLE

THE present war is not only a conflict between nations. It is a war of the false gods of Teutonism against all that Christianity stands for; an onslaught upon the Christian foundations of society.

In those countries which were overrun by the enemy the issue, from the Christian point of view, was clear from the first. The Churches had always steadfastly denounced the anti-Christian concepts of life which were the core of the Nazi political philosophy, and after the invasion they resisted all attempts of the usurpers to impose their pagan practices upon the subjugated. They supplied the moral leadership which could not be found elsewhere, and, in order not to perish, the people listened eagerly to the trusted voices of their shepherds.

It was a heavy task with which the Church leaders in Holland were confronted, and how they met the challenge is described in the following pages. Never did they fail the millions who put their trust in them, and their moral strength grew as the perils around them increased.

There were two main reasons why Nazism did its utmost to destroy the influence of the Christian Churches: (1) the ethical principle of Christian charity is incompatible with the merciless policy on which the Nazis rely for the final victory of Teutonism; (2) no community can be expected to become really devoted to the Nazi view of life while the Churches retain any influence upon its educational and social development.

It was the Nazi ideology as an anti-Christian movement which the leaders of the Churches in the occupied countries had to oppose if they intended to remain true to their mission. In Holland they opposed National Socialism long before the war. Even as far back as 1934 the Roman Catholic hierarchy threatened the most rigorous penalties of the Church against those members who joined the Dutch National Socialists. Protestant Church leaders were no less severe in their condemnation of the movement. If, in spite of efficient German propaganda, the Nazis after some initial progress never made any real headway in Holland it was due largely to the unwavering attitude adopted from the very beginning by the leaders of the Christian Churches.

After the country was invaded by the Germans, there may have



been some doubts among churchmen as to the attitude which the conquerors would adopt with regard to the religious communities. Some may have taken at its face value the Reich Commissioner Seyss-Inquart's promise, made in his speech of May 25, 1940, that the foundations of Dutch life would not be touched. They may have been encouraged at first by the fact that the Dutch National Socialists did not at once find favour with the German authorities. However this may be, such hopes were short-lived. In the fall of 1940 the Reformed Churches had to remind Seyss-Inquart, in a joint declaration, of his promise not to force Nazi ideologies upon the people of Holland. This reminder was embodied in a letter of October 24, 1940, protesting against the ousting of all Jewish civil servants.

"We are profoundly moved by the purport of these measures," the Reformed Churches wrote, "which invade important spiritual interests and are contrary to Christian mercy. . . . Besides, these restrictions also apply to members of our Church who, having embraced the Christian faith during the past generations, were accepted by us in complete equality of rights, as the Holy Script emphatically desires."

Henry P. van Dusen, in his book, *What is the Church Doing?* (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), calls the effect of this first official protest "electrifying," and quotes a Dutch pastor as saying: "October 24, 1940, was a historic day for our Church. The terrible silence in which our Church and our nation had lived for months was broken. The Church had spoken at last and showed itself to be a Church which subordinates its own life to its message. The Church and the nation are deeply thankful for this word."

This protest was directed against a specific aspect of the German occupation; against the first clear application of Nazi ideology; against a typical Nazi measure, incompatible with Christian doctrine and Christian ethics. Discrimination against the Dutch Jews could be condemned from many points of view; as an interference with the existing order in the Netherlands; as a gross injustice in itself; as a crime against the laws of human progress; for as many reasons as there were good, upright Jewish citizens in Holland. But it was reserved for the Churches to protest in the name of Christian mercy.

In uttering this protest the Reformed Churches kept within the strict limits of their ecclesiastical domain. It was only the beginning of the great struggle which the Protestant and Catholic Churches



of Holland had to carry on against the Nazi efforts to poison the Dutch community with their "New Paganism."

But the Churches did not restrict themselves to their responsibilities as keepers of the Christian faith. They also remained true to their historical task as keepers of the nation's national conscience. They felt it was their duty to give leadership to the people in their conduct towards the occupying power; to oppose the conqueror's attempts at corruption of national traditions and ideals; to condemn illegal and unrighteous acts, and to support with all their moral authority the people's love of country and independence.

A few weeks before the Reformed Churches issued their protest their General Assembly had submitted to Seyss-Inquart a bold statement of principle, in which the oecumenical character of the Church was emphatically asserted, while at the same time its legal position under German occupation was defined in the following proud and unforgettable words:

"The General Assembly declares that in its opinion legal authority still rests with Her Majesty, the Queen. Through the occupation of our country the factual power fell into the hands of the occupation authorities, but the sovereignty of the Netherlands Government, and more especially that of the Queen, has not suffered thereby. Our form of government and our relations with the House of Orange—matters which, according to the Reich Commissioner's declaration, the Netherlands people must decide independently—are no subjects for deliberation. The Churches have their firm opinion on these points; they do not mean to forsake a historical link which dates back more than three and a half centuries."

## II

### AWAKENING

A PROMINENT Dutch Christian has said of the Dutch Reformed Church that in the thirties of this century it had become "a Church without spiritual leadership and without a voice. Good work was done by individual pastors, but the Church as such seemed condemned to remain a bureaucratic organization, precariously holding together a great variety of unrelated groups and



persons without a clear common message or purpose. It was pastor-centred, largely receptive, often theologically divided and very bourgeois. Traditions of individualism and self-satisfaction have reigned for hundreds of years. As a result, its influence in the country was decreasing. If ever a Church needed a great shock to be awakened, it was this Church."

Perhaps this picture, although true in itself, may give rise to deductions of too gloomy a character. Even if the position of the Dutch Reformed Church had weakened, religious sentiment had remained a strong element in the Dutch community, and it may even be said that theological divisions, which have at all times more or less characterized religious life in Holland, were at the same time a striking evidence of unabated interest in the problems of religion. War and invasion are among the greatest unifying influences; all interest is withdrawn from the relatively small difference on which people in times of peace and prosperity lay so much stress. In the hour of trial the Reformed Church, like so many temporal institutions, proved to be much stronger than it had seemed to be in the last decades. Inconspicuous pastors proved to be undaunted leaders of their parishes, and parishioners who for many years had been only indifferent members of the flock were ready to accept spiritual leadership if it were given with the courage which distinguished Dutch Church leaders in the turbulent periods of the past.

This would have been a natural reaction in any religious-minded country; in Holland, where the Churches had played such an important part in social and political life, the impulse to rely on God and follow His ministers was not merely the consequence of overwhelming disaster, but the only means of asserting the nation's traditional character in face of a God-denying enemy.

The moral strength of the Churches was greatly strengthened by the growth of an interconfessional unity such as had never existed before. Holland always had been a striking example of a somewhat paradoxical combination of complete tolerance and strongly developed sectarianism. For many decades the confessional parties had been closely allied in politics; yet religious sectarianism had thoroughly imbued public life. If the invader had hoped to gain any advantage from confessional antagonisms, he was sorely disillusioned. Whatever may have been the differences between the great Protestant and Catholic communities, they were one in their uncompromising condemnation of National



Socialism as it was framed in Holland after the German pattern. When Germany invaded the Netherlands, both Catholic and Protestant Church leaders realized that only by complete concord would they be able to defend the Christian foundations of Dutch national life against Nazi paganism.

Eighty-four per cent of the Dutch population are registered as members of Christian communities, 47·8 per cent belonging to various Protestant denominations, and 36·4 to the Catholic Church. The latter form the strongest single religious body. Moreover, they are politically organized, and constitute the strongest single parliamentary party. Protestants and Catholics alike had their own well-organized trade union movements, their own schools, colleges, and universities, and proportionally, perhaps, the most strongly developed confessional Press in the world, including a considerable number of Protestant and Catholic daily newspapers with large circulations.

The Churches were well aware that, in spite of Seyss-Inquart's initial promise not to interfere with the Dutch social structure, the Germans would gradually turn against those institutions through which they exerted their influence upon the nation. The leaders of the Churches, therefore, knew that peace between them and the invaders was impossible. Even during the first weeks, when the Germans prepared their ground with all the artifices of hail-fellow-well-met tactics, they had to be continually on their guard. During that period the Germans offered all those enticements which might appeal to a population which had just passed through a nerve-racking experience. But at the same time they conducted a rather subtle agitation intended to undermine the people's loyalty to their Queen and the House of Orange. Assisted by members of the Dutch Fifth Column, who made up for their small numbers by feverish activity, they inaugurated a whispering campaign to persuade the people that their Queen had deserted them. The enemy knew what the leadership of the House of Orange meant to the Dutch; they knew that the Queen was the visible symbol of unity, and that, if they succeeded in making her subjects believe that Wilhelmina, by leaving the country, had betrayed her trust, the nation might become an easy prey to the National Socialist bait, and find itself deprived of its moral base of resistance against Holland's absorption by the Third Reich.

At the same time the enemy and his henchmen would busily talk of moral as well as material reconstruction, and impressive, if somewhat nebulous, schemes were discussed and propagated.



It was to be a reconstruction not merely of what had been destroyed during the invasion, not only of Rotterdam and Middelburg and Den Helder and the numberless railway bridges, roads, and other public works. A new youth was to come into existence, a new world of labour, a new education, a new broadcasting system, a new Press, in fact, a new people.

The meaning of all this was only too obvious to a clear-sighted observer. First of all, the Queen and the Government had to be discredited as "run-away traitors," as cowards who had "left the people in the lurch" in their hour of tribulation to face smoking ruins and all the misery which would have been avoided if they had not allowed themselves to become the "tools of England." For now the Dutch would have to rebuild without their Queen and Government. Of course, they could not be expected to rejoice at having the Germans as their masters, but their own rulers having failed them, they would have to make the best of it, and would have to co-operate with the Germans especially in the great work of reconstruction. It was in the common interest of the people and of the occupying power that the ruins should be cleared with the least possible delay and that new and far finer buildings should take their place, and that roads and communications should be restored. One could not expect the Dutch to live under the insanitary conditions resulting from the devastations of war. So they had to co-operate, and the Germans, being now the lawful masters of the country, would superintend the ambitious schemes for rebuilding.

It was, after all, said the whisperers, not such a bad thing that the Queen and Government had "fled"; they certainly would never have conceived such magnificent schemes. They were rather "reactionary," and had never given any evidence of appreciation of the wonderful achievements of the "New Order"; they could not complain if the Dutch co-operated with the Germans in the great work of reconstruction. Was it not, according to international law, the duty of the Germans to promote the welfare of the countries they occupied, and were they not entitled to the loyal co-operation of the population?

And this was what Germany really wanted, not only in Holland, but all over Europe. She wanted the subjugated peoples to "co-operate." The whole of Europe was to be reconstructed, in Europe's own interest, for Germany aimed to create a new and better and happier world. Had not the Dutch always been great friends of progress and modernization? One had only to look at



their modern architecture, at their achievements in the various arts, at some of their bold social experiments, to admit that fundamentally they were an up-to-date nation. But they had been hampered by certain cherished traditions and superstitions. So, for the matter of that, had the German people before the advent of Hitler. One of the worst superstitions of the Dutch had been their devotion to the House of Orange. They should understand by now that this had been a great mistake. Another had been (but this was not yet openly said) that they had maintained Christianity as the foundation of modern life. Even Catholics might build ultra-modern churches in Holland, but behind the modernistic façades the old traditions and superstitions were held in honour. The Dutch might build modern town halls, but this never changed the old-fashioned spirit of their municipal councils. That is what one found everywhere in Holland—modern façades, but behind them the old spirit, the old conceptions, the old traditions. Did not the turn of world events offer the Dutch an unrivalled opportunity to co-operate with the Germans in a great scheme of reconstruction in the framework of the New Order? And real reconstruction meant not only new superstructures, but new foundations as well.

In those first weeks of utter confusion this was perhaps the greatest menace to the moral independence of the Netherlands people. At that time they did not know where to turn. The behaviour of the Germans was moderate, and in some respects even amiable. They were by no means the harsh masters that had ravaged Czechoslovakia and Poland. This benevolent attitude, however, did not last more than a couple of months, and was given up as soon as it became clear that the Dutch were on their guard against the seductions of German amiability.

Even before the Reformed Churches issued their first memorandum to Seyss-Inquart, a leader of the Christian youth movement, Dr. J. Eijkman, published a bold warning against this German-inspired talk of reconstruction on "new foundations." Quoting Paul in his first Epistle to the Corinthians (iii. 11), he said, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ," and he reminded his countrymen that they could only build and rebuild on the foundation of the Holy Scripture. That being so, he argued, "then Judas, the betrayer of Christ, must not be allowed to join in the work of reconstruction. For the Judas in our midst has made false idols his saviours: the soulless State, race, blood, and soil. We Dutch Christians cannot build anew on those foundations, nor join in the work of recon-



struction with such Judases as helpers. Our people are forbidden by the German authorities to speak of the House of Orange and of Dutch independence. Teach them then to build on the Gospel which taught them respect for the dynasty and for their freedom."

Dr. Eijkman's pamphlet was a noble confession of Christian and patriotic faith. To tens of thousands it was an awakening. In those days the seeds of resistance were sown; in those days the hopes of the Germans to subjugate the spirit of the Dutch were crushed for ever.

### III

#### THE CHURCHES CHAMPION THE CAUSE OF THE JEWS

MR. VAN DUSEN rightly states that "in Holland, Christian action has found most striking expression in the defence of a community almost wholly outside the bounds of the Church itself, the Jews." He recalls how, when the first anti-Jewish legislation was introduced, Mr. N. H. de Graaf, an official in the Ministry of Social Affairs at The Hague, resigned because "to reject the Jews is to reject Jesus Christ." This, although a strictly personal gesture, reflected faithfully the state of mind and attitude among Dutch Calvinists. Although no religious section of the population ever for a moment was willing to subscribe to the German measures against the Jews, no Church could resent them more profoundly than that of Calvin, whose ethics are so largely inspired by veneration for the Old Testament origins of Christianity.

In the seventeenth century refugee Jews from Spain and Portugal sought shelter in the Dutch Republic. The Hollanders, at that time, were fighting a successful war to free themselves from Spanish tyranny, and they befriended the Jewish fugitives as fellow victims of the same ruthless Government. They proved themselves worthy of the hospitality so generously offered, and contributed by their industry to the phenomenal prosperity of the young Republic. Thus Dutch Jewry became a valuable element of the Dutch nation, and their loyalty was rewarded at a later period in Dutch history by the grant of full citizenship and complete equality with their fellow burghers.

The Hollanders, therefore, do not look upon the Dutch Jews



as aliens. Their persecution by the Nazis was bitterly resented as an attack upon the nation of which they formed part. To tolerate the persecution of the Jews appeared to Dutch Calvinists an unforgivable sin. They were in conscience bound to show the ruthless invader that they stood firm in their solidarity with their Jewish fellow-citizens—a solidarity which had been sealed by history, tradition, and creed. The General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church boldly proclaimed its historical ties with the Jews in a letter published towards the end of September 1941.

“Under God’s providence the Jews have lived among us for centuries and are united with us in a common history and a common responsibility. The commandment of the Saviour to love our neighbours refers to them as it does to any other neighbour. . . . Subjects must obey the authorities in all things that are not in conflict with the word of God, even when the decisions of the authorities seem arbitrary to them. . . . But the Apostolic word, ‘We ought to obey God rather than man,’ becomes valid when the authorities demand that which is against the commandment of God. . . . The Christian Church then accepts suffering for the sake of the Gospel.”

The Germans proceeded warily with the introduction of other Nazi practices and pretended (as they had done in their own country) that they would respect the spiritual mission of the Churches according to their own obscure lights, but they never left the slightest doubt as to their intention to destroy Judaism entirely in any country that came under their sway. Badly informed as they were with regard to the real sentiments among the nation they had invaded, they may have hoped that the Dutch would acquiesce in the persecution of the Jews provided the Gentiles were left alone. They may have counted on the Dutch being willing to throw the Jews to the German crocodiles in the hope of satisfying their rapacious instincts. They misjudged Dutch intelligence as well as Dutch character. It was realized at once in Holland what application of the Nuremburg racial laws would mean, not only to the Jews, but to the Dutch as a nation. The slightest semblance on their part of condoning the outrage would have been fatal. It would have meant the loss of moral independence; the creation of bonds of solidarity with the enemy against the Jewish race; an unforgivable capitulation to the revolting ethics of Nazism.

The Reformed Church did not stand alone in this struggle. Theologically and ethically the Catholic Church had the same



reasons to reject all acquiescence in racial persecution, and though she entered the field somewhat later, her protests against the invader's anti-Jewish measures were equally forceful, and increased in strength as the regulations against Dutch Jews became more violent and merciless. And behind the Churches stood the overwhelming majority of those who did not belong to any Christian denomination. The Jewish issue had at once become a national issue in the fullest sense of the world. Sympathy with the persecuted Jews was shown by all sections of the population all over the country. As early as January 1941 the tough boys of the populous Jordaan quarter in Amsterdam marched in serried ranks to the centre of the Jewish quarter and fought the rowdies who attempted to engineer anti-Jewish riots; strikes were declared all over the city, and martial law had to be proclaimed for several days. When the Jews were ordered by the Germans to evacuate the town of Weesp under the smoke of the capital, hundreds of Gentiles escorted them to the station, carrying their luggage, and the last thing they heard when they boarded the train was the friendly shout "We'll meet again." At a later period, when the Jews were driven from their homes to concentration camps, to be carried off to Eastern Europe, those among them who were able to escape were always sure of shelter in the homes of Gentile compatriots, in spite of the heavy penalties threatened against the harbouring of Jewish fugitives.

It was the task of the Churches, both Protestant and Catholic, to raise this nation-wide resistance to the level of Christian ethics, and teach the masses to protest in the name of Christian charity. The terrible distress of the martyred Jews of Holland ceased to be an evil in itself; it became a symptom of the spiritual distress of the whole people of the Netherlands. No Dutch Gentile could be indifferent to the fate of the Jews without being indifferent to his own fate, to the salvation of his country, to the future of the national community. The Germans, by their own ferocity, created an even firmer solidarity between Jews and Gentiles than has ever existed before.

On February 17, 1942, spokesmen of the Reformed and Catholic Churches had a personal interview with Seyss-Inquart and handed him a protest against the "almost complete lawlessness" under which, without trial or condemnation, thousands were sent, for an unlimited time, to "camps or elsewhere."

The Catholic Church did not merely follow the lead of the Reformed in her attitude with regard to the persecution of the



Jews. The relations between Catholics and Jews had been most friendly in Holland for many generations, but in the course of the last twenty years there had been a rapidly increasing interest, among Dutch Catholics, in the work of the so-called mission under Israel. The Archconfraternity of Prayer for the conversion of Israel numbered hundreds of thousands of members in Holland—more than in any other single country, and the Dutch branch of the Catholic Guild of Israel had displayed great activity, making, perhaps, not many converts, but certainly many friends among the Jews. Besides, no religious community since Hitler's advent to power had more militantly opposed the rise of National Socialism in Holland than the Catholic Church, and anti-semitism was too essential an element in the Nazi creed to permit the Catholic leaders to remain passive in face of the invaders' first measures against the Jews, without compromising the whole Catholic attitude towards the paganistic movement.

Thus the Catholic community formed a formidable barrier against National Socialist progress in Holland, and it has rightly been said that if the ecclesiastical and lay leaders in Germany had adopted the same uncompromising attitude in 1932 and 1933, Hitler would never have been able to rise to power. It should be noted that there was a difference between the Protestant and the Catholic angle in that, whereas championship of the Jews was the most rigorous form in which the Reformed Churches opposed the excesses of Nazi tyranny, Catholic interference on behalf of the Jews was more or less incidental to the entire Catholic plan of defence against the enemy's abuse of power.

Even before the invasion the Catholic and Protestant communities had derived additional strength from their community of purpose with regard to the National Socialist menace which, if in Holland itself it had not taken any alarming proportions, became more threatening from month to month as Germany's influence was spreading all over the European continent. After the invasion this unity of purpose was consolidated. Protestant and Catholic Church leaders were national leaders in the full sense of the world. Whether they acted in common—as they did on many occasions—or separately, they always had the ear of the nation as a whole. The General Assemblies of the Reformed Church in their public statements and the Catholic Hierarchy in its Pastorals did not speak on behalf of sections of the population; they each spoke for the entire nation. So did the pastor and the parish priest who, of a Sunday, in some obscure village church,



quoted in their sermons the words from the Gospel which express condemnation of such evil as was wrought day after day by the tyrant.

It will be learned from the following pages that an increasing number of pastors and priests and lay churchmen paid for their brave example with their freedom, even with their lives. Not without continual peril to themselves could they live up to their vocation, which only becomes a vocation in the true sense of the word when it is fraught with peril to life and liberty. Yet one thing should not be overlooked. If, in spite of persecution and violence, the leaders of the Churches denounced, with ever-increasing vehemence, the unspeakable crimes of the Germans in Holland, they knew that they and their flocks were not wholly isolated and left to the cruel whims of their oppressors. If their words were bold and their acts were brave, they knew that they were witnessed by the free and Christian world at large. There must be hundreds of thousands of Protestants in the world who found inspiration in the noble words of Dutch Reformed churchmen. Neither were the Catholic leaders wholly isolated from the centre of the Catholic world; they must have known something of what was going on behind the walls of the Vatican City, and when Dutch bishops spoke strong words of condemnation, they must have felt themselves supported by the power and approval of the Holy See.

In this battle for Christian justice the Churches of Holland have suffered appalling losses. Many of their most undaunted fighters have been imprisoned; others have been killed. Much of what made them materially strong has been destroyed. Their great newspapers have been suspended or handed over to traitors who are ready to speak the enemy's language. Their broadcasting stations have been confiscated. Their trade unions have been dissolved. Many of their religious institutions have been closed. But the weaker they became in material weapons, the stronger grew their resistance, the more powerful their words of protest and condemnation, and the more formidable the determination with which the nation rallied round them.

This struggle of the Churches in Holland against the invader's attempt to corrupt the moral foundations of national life is a development of the greatest interest to the whole Christian world. Small as is the country, compared to the big nations by which it is surrounded, it is, traditionally as well as actually, one of the corner-stones of religious life in Europe. It is, moreover, one of those countries where religious development has been identified



with democratic development and with the political ideal of freedom. In the turbulent times which are bound to come after war and victory, when the clash of ideologies will be pursued with other means, the Churches of Holland, both Protestant and Catholic, seasoned in the hard life struggle with the invaders, will be a bastion of strength on a ravaged continent trying to recover its soul.

#### IV

### CLOSE THE RANKS!

BEFORE the war National Socialism had been repeatedly denounced by the clergy, Protestant and Catholic alike, and by other Christian leaders and institutions, including the Press. In Germany, Roman Catholics were not forbidden by their spiritual leaders to join the Nazi movement, even though a number of priests and bishops never ceased to utter warnings against its pagan tendencies. The National Socialist movement in Holland, which started growing after Hitler had seized power in Germany, did not in any essential detail differ from the German movement. It was, indeed, led and promoted by men who had always more or less identified themselves with Pan-Germanism, and who would have been perfectly willing to transplant any successful German political movement to Holland. The Dutch bishops, however, not merely condemned National Socialism, but—contrary to their German brethren—adopted a most uncompromising attitude towards those Catholics who were inclined to join it. For they realized that behind the budding movement there was the formidable and ruthless strength of the Third Empire, which tried to get an ideological foothold in the Netherlands as a prelude to wholesale absorption. Thus the spiritual struggle against the force of Nazism started many years before the invasion, and nobody could doubt that after the invasion it would be resumed with redoubled force under far more difficult and dangerous conditions.

Scarcely six weeks after the General Assembly of the Reformed Church had heartened the nation by its public confession of national faith, the bishops of the Catholic Church issued their first warning, couched, it is true, in cautious terms, for all semblance of provocation had to be avoided, but downright in its meaning and implications. A Pastoral letter which, on November 10, 1940, was



read in all Catholic churches and chapels, declared that the world was threatened by a materialistic and nationalistic outlook, "in which there is no place for Christ," and it added that the faithful would have to fight for the preservation of their spiritual goods, especially of their denominational schools.

No mention was made of Nazism, not even of the Dutch brand, but it was clear that "spiritual goods," such as denominational schools, could only be in danger under the rule of the invader. The first measures against the Dutch Jews, against which the Protestant Churches had protested some weeks earlier, were an unmistakable indication of the trend which things were going to take; if the Germans still went warily it was because in their complete misunderstanding of the Dutch state of mind, they still entertained hopes that they might win over a considerable portion of the Dutch population, not out of love or sympathy, but just for safety's sake. They had still to learn that the moral cowardice which had made the masses of the German people such an easy prey to the bullies who were eager to enslave them, is foreign to the moral make-up of the Dutch. The strongly worded protests of the Reformed Church leaders had not yet taught them this truth. The comparative silence of the Catholic clergy may have led them to hope that the most powerful single religious body in the Netherlands might be willing to compromise, provided its essential rights remained untouched. This hope, which had never been founded on any fact or act, was shattered on November 10, 1940. The Bishops' Pastoral had a national significance. For the Protestants, too, had their denominational schools and trade unions. Every Christian, of whatever creed, had the same interests at stake. The enemy may have thought that he could destroy the great religious communities piecemeal; that no Christian front, which at the same time would have the character of a national front, would be formed so long as one denomination could hope to be spared at the expense of the other. But to his disappointment Christian solidarity was taking shape. The first counter-attacks were made by both Catholics and Protestants, on a modest scale as yet, but as an unmistakable token of alertness and readiness to fight.

There is a close relation between the recurrent waves of resistance in the occupied countries and the development of military and political events. Public protests and warnings by the Churches were issued when the battle of England had been lost by the enemy and the possibility of invasion of the British Isles had



become remote. It should, however, not be assumed that in the preceding months, when the German armies made their march of conquest through Europe, when France was prostrate, and Britain stood alone against overwhelming odds, the Churches had abandoned themselves to dull resignation or despair. In those gloomy days the people flocked to their churches in greater numbers than ever before, not only to forget the horrors of the present, but to find strength for their failing hearts in prayer and meditation. Many simple parish priests proved themselves moral heroes. Sunday after Sunday they poured hope into the hearts of their people, proclaiming the invincibility of the cause of Christ, which is the cause of the oppressed and the afflicted.

In this first half-year of the occupation the Christian communities lost some of their most efficacious means of combat. They were supported by a number of daily newspapers and periodicals of their own. Rightly or wrongly Dutch newspaper publishers, with very few exceptions, decided to continue their publications in spite of the foreign occupation. Although they were well aware that they would have to conform to the orders of the occupation authorities, they hoped that even a very limited freedom might enable them to counteract some of the worst effects of German propaganda. The two papers which were most ferociously attacked by the German-controlled Press and radio were the Calvinist *Standaard* of Amsterdam and the Catholic *Maasbode* of Rotterdam. They were by far the largest and most influential Christian newspapers in Holland. The editor of the *Standaard* was Dr. Hendrikus Colijn who, prior to the summer of 1939, had been Prime Minister for a number of years, and who was generally considered the strongest personality in the Dutch political world. The German authorities left him unmolested for some time, and let him uphold in his editorials the principles of Christian freedom and democracy, and champion Dutch national ideals at public meetings of Christian organizations in various parts of the country. It was only after many months that the Germans arrested Dr. Colijn, confiscated his paper, and appointed a notorious traitor who had never belonged to any religious community to the editorial chair which had been occupied in the past by some of Holland's greatest Christian leaders.

Thus the *Standaard* was lost to the great cause which Colijn had defended. During his editorship it had been denounced by the German propaganda in intemperate language. It had shared this distinction with its Catholic colleague, the *Maasbode*. For



several years preceding the war that paper had been barred from Germany because of its faithful reports and trenchant comments on religious persecution under the Nazis. During the fighting in Rotterdam and the murderous bombardment which followed, its offices and plant were razed to the ground. It was offered hospitality by a more fortunate colleague and never stopped publication even during the days of fighting. Being reduced to a small scale paper after the destruction of its premises, it reserved practically all its space for the great moral issues which the trials of war and foreign occupation entailed. Without entering into polemics, it upheld Christian principles in their uncompromising integrity. It printed the Bishops' Pastorals in full, and commented upon them in unambiguous terms. The Germans finally ordered the liquidation of the courageous paper in the spring of 1941. But by that time it had accomplished a great task during the most critical period of the occupation. It had, in a time of utter confusion, shown the right and only way to two and three-quarter millions of Dutch Catholics and spread the warnings of the bishops and their call to battle.

After the threatened invasion of Britain had been staved off indefinitely, in the fall of 1940, resistance in Holland came more and more to the surface. Liberation within the lifetime of the present generation had once more become a practical possibility. Moreover, the first shock of the invasion and conquest had passed, and with it the dumb passivity of the first months of occupation. No longer was there a feeling that some sort of reluctant co-operation with the enemy, who apparently could not be defeated in years to come, might be necessary. By the end of 1940 the whole of occupied Europe was in a state of ferment. In Norway, too, the Churches publicly denounced the worst abuses of the German invaders. By January 1941 the Germans' interference with the lawful functions of the clergy had become such that a protest was read from every pulpit, in which it was said, "When the Government tolerates violence and injustice and brings pressure to bear on the souls of men, then the Church is the guardian of conscience." Thus the Norwegian Churches took the same stand which the Reformed Church of Holland had taken a few months earlier. In Norway, however, the crisis was more urgent because of the publicly announced design to elevate Quisling to a puppet Premiership. This led to a state of open revolt; acts of serious sabotage, including the wrecking of trains and resulting in the death of many Germans and followers of Quisling, were reported



from all over the country. Although the Church was not responsible for these acts of violence, she certainly was at the back of the national resistance against German tyranny; the Lutheran clergy were in direct conflict with the Germans and their Quisling accomplices; they were fighting for the very existence of the Church, which was threatened with extermination, as were the schools, when early in 1941 it was ordered that both pupils and teachers had to enrol in Quisling organizations.

The events in Norway had a strong repercussion in most of the occupied countries, but nowhere was this more noticeable than in Holland. The Germans had used Norway as a sort of experimental station; it was in that country that they put their real designs into practice, and in Holland, therefore, all doubt as to the Germans' ultimate intentions was dispelled. In December 1940 it had become clear to observers in the few remaining neutral countries that there existed some kind of "internationale" between the oppressed nations; that corresponding actions took place simultaneously in various countries; that the nerve centres of these activities were in Norway and Holland, and that in both countries moral leadership of resistance was with the Churches.

The year 1941 opened in a state of high tension all over occupied Europe. The Dutch had recovered their full national consciousness. They were ready and prepared to accept the bitter fight and all its consequences. They knew that their leaders would not fail them, and they were determined not to fail their leaders. And let it be said to the undying honour of the Churches: it was due to their untiring labour in the months of despair that the nation, by turning to the Almighty, had refuted the legend of the omnipotence of the all-conquering German.

## V

### NAZISM *VERSUS* BOLSHEVISM

THREE outside influences helped to stimulate resistance in the occupied countries. They were the general war situation, Russia's entry into the conflict, and the political evolution in the United States.

The year 1941 started auspiciously for the United Nations. The British, under General Wavell, successfully pursued their desert war in Libya. For the first time Axis land forces were severely



beaten. In the occupied countries the effect of this victory was probably much greater than in Britain itself. Oppressed populations swing back and forth between extremes of optimism and pessimism. From Dutchmen who escaped from occupied Holland we know that hopes were running high in the first months of 1941. These were the months in which resistance reached its first peak. The population was more turbulent than ever; there were widespread strikes and an increasing number of serious cases of sabotage, and general unrest prevailed. It is hard to say whether, because of these symptoms of resistance, the Germans tightened up their rules and regulations, or whether they acted according to plans laid down long before. However this may be, the general recrudescence of discontent and the stiffening of the German régime coincided in a remarkable manner. It was in the days of the victorious Libyan campaign that the Protestant Churches found overwhelming support among all sections of the population in their protests against the German attempts to oust the Jews completely from the nation's social and economic life.

In March they addressed a memorandum to the Secretaries General of all Government departments, informing them that they felt compelled to say how deeply the development of affairs was disturbing them. "The Church considers it a sacred duty to defend right and justice, truth and charity. Whenever in public life those high principles are threatened or attacked, the Church is bound to make herself heard. That these principles are now seriously menaced can hardly be denied by anyone observing the state of affairs among our people." As clear symptoms of this situation were mentioned the intensified bad treatment of "the Jewish minority of our Netherlands nation," and the "increasing uncertainty of justice and continuous limitation of the liberties which form the indispensable foundation for the fulfilment of our Christian duties. That is why our Churches feel constrained to turn to you with the urgent prayer that you, as far as lies within your power, will see that truth and mercy remain the leading motives for the behaviour of the authorities."

At about this same time the Catholic bishops ordered a Pastoral Letter to be read in which they reiterated their seven-year-old ruling that the Holy Sacraments were to be withheld from any Catholic "who was known to support the National-Socialist idea to an important extent." This reiteration may have been desirable because after ten months of German rule, many Catholics were perhaps somewhat confused as to the validity of the old ruling,



which had no counterpart in Germany. Simple minds may have imagined that the conquest of the country by National Socialist Germany entailed a change in the jurisdiction of the Dutch Hierarchy, and that Dutch Catholics who wanted to turn Nazi might be as free to do so as were German Catholics. This was, of course, a dangerous error, which was assiduously exploited by German propaganda. It was clear that the affirmation of the existing interdict had a further purpose. It was intended to manifest the complete independence of the Catholic Church in Holland from the Catholic Church in Germany.

The attitude of the Dutch clergy, both Protestant and Catholic, is often compared, and of course favourably compared, to that which, apart from a few honourable exceptions, the Church leaders in Germany adopted in the days of Hitler's rise to dictatorship. It should, however, be kept in mind that this comparison, however favourable to the leaders of the Churches in Holland, does not do justice to the Dutch nation. It conveys the false impression that there had been a possibility of the German Nazi "revolution" repeating itself in Holland. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the struggle is carried on, not against dissident or treacherous Dutchmen, but against Germany, the enemy; that the Netherlands are a nation at war against Germany; that Holland in Europe is occupied by the Germans, and that the Churches are protecting the community against the invader, against his injustices, against his tyranny, against his crimes, and of course against his accomplices.

The consequences of the bishops' decision to reiterate their ban on National Socialism were far reaching. Spiritually it united the Catholics of Holland in a common stand for the moral doctrines of Catholicism and for the defence of the Dutch character of the Church in Holland as distinct from that of the Church in Germany. Morally it strengthened the position of all loyal Dutch Catholics, who were now assured that in their stand against German corruption they had the full support of the clergy. There have been many cases in which priests refused to solemnize marriages in which one of the parties had sinned against the episcopal interdict; or to bury in consecrated ground members of, or open sympathizers with, the National Socialist Party. At a later period, when some thousands of Dutch Nazis enlisted as volunteers for the Russian front, requiems for the repose of the souls of fallen Catholics were no longer allowed.

The first application of this interdict occurred a few weeks after



the bishops' orders had been issued. The ecclesiastical authorities refused to give permission for the burial in consecrated ground of a so-called "stormtrooper" in the province of Limburg who had been killed in a street brawl. Even after the Reich Commissioner had issued a formal order for his funeral, the clergy restricted the service to the reading of the funeral mass. It was the first such incident. Still more numerous were the cases in which the clergy refused to solemnize marriages to which the Episcopal interdict applied. Those who challenged the priests were with a few exceptions only nominal Catholics whose chief aim was not to be married in conformity with the Catholic rites, but to propagate the Nazi-German doctrines of the subservient position of the Church in the totalitarian State, and of the compatibility of Catholic with Nazi ethics.

The war situation meanwhile had again changed to the advantage of the Axis Powers. A terrible reverse followed upon Wavell's victorious march to Bizerta, and the spectacular advance of the Greeks in Albania had completely collapsed and was followed by one of the major disasters which the Allied Powers have suffered in this war. For a long succession of months the oppressed nations had to survive without the stimulating news of successful military action by the Allies; the general outlook had become gloomy indeed. Yet the Dutch never fell back into that state of dull despair which had overwhelmed them during the first months of the invasion. They had pledged themselves to the guerilla war of resistance, and were firmly determined to carry it through.

Hitler himself, in his arrogance and over-self-confidence, brought on the turn of the tide for which his victims were praying. On June 22nd he attacked Russia. Nazi Germany re-assumed the role of "protector" of the Western World against Bolshevism. One of the major advantages that Hitler expected to derive from this move was discord in and among the allied nations with regard to the acceptance of Soviet Russia as an ally. German propaganda was now in a position to introduce a new and more impressive slogan in the occupied countries.

The Germans knew too well that their "New Order" was detested all over Holland. The war against Russia provided them with a new slogan, which they expected would find grace with the Dutch people. They were defending Europe now against the Bolshevik onslaught. They were fighting an "ideology" which the overwhelming majority of the population of the Netherlands had



always feared and denounced as an evil, an ideology which, owing to its "anti-God" practices, had been most vehemently opposed by the Churches and strictly banned by the Catholic Church. So Germany hoped that the Dutch public would admit that the war against Russia was a "just war" in the true interest of Europe and of human civilization generally. Especially the Churches, the most steadfast enemies of "anti-God" Bolshevism, would have to admit that the whole attitude of Nazi Germany had to be re-appraised in the new light shed upon it by the crusade against Russia. Britain, which since the invasion of the Netherlands, had become more and more popular with the Dutch population, could now be decried as the ally and accomplice of Bolshevism. Better than that, the Dutch Government in London and even the Queen herself, against whom the Germans had been carrying on such a stubborn campaign without the least results, could be put in the pillory as aiders and abettors of "Bolshevist barbarism." How could those clergymen who, despite the strict prohibition issued by the occupation authorities, continued to pray in public every Sunday for the Queen and Royal Family, persevere in this attitude if the Queen's Government recognized the Soviets as Holland's new ally in the struggle against Germany? Wouldn't it rather be the duty of the clergy, Catholic as well as Protestant, to fulminate against the Russians and ask the faithful to pray for their speedy and crushing defeat?

A few days after the German challenge to Russia the Queen addressed the people of the Netherlands in a broadcast over Radio-Orange, and welcomed Russia as an ally with whom the Dutch would one day fight side by side. If Dutch leaders had ever been in doubt as to the attitude the Queen and Government would adopt with regard to Russia, once it had entered the ranks of the United Nations, all doubt was eliminated by Her Majesty's pronouncement. Had this war been considered—as some would have it—as a purely ideological war, had there been any reservations in the Queen's statement, the Church leaders in Holland might have found themselves in a somewhat painful dilemma. Now the issue was perfectly clear.

The German authorities in Holland realized that the Queen's statement annihilated their hopes that the Churches would give up their resistance. On June 30, 1941, the Nazis, through the medium of one of the Dutch papers under their control, had the Queen denounced as "that woman beyond the Channel who is entreating the Dutch to consider themselves the allies of the Soviet



devils. . . . Her thousands of subjects now understand the treason committed by London capitalism and Bolshevism now indissolubly linked." Two days earlier Seyss-Inquart, speaking at an anti-Russian demonstration engineered at Amsterdam, for the first time openly declared that "the Dutch Nazis have the right to claim the leadership of the Dutch people." And in the early part of July a "Volunteer Legion of the Netherlands" was sent to the Caucasus to fight with the Germans against the "Bolsheviks."

Thus the stage was set for a new phase in the struggle. Had not the Churches, enormously strengthened by the Queen's appeal, at once adopted the right attitude, great confusion might have been created in the minds of thousands of Dutch Christians by the Nazi-Bolshevist antithesis. Alluding to both Catholic and Protestant Church leaders one of the principal German-inspired papers wrote on July 7: "These blind men first supported anti-Communism but now, when Germany wishes to destroy Communism, they side with those whom they previously damned. If they still hope for an English or Anglo-Russian victory they are indeed the worst enemies of Christ's Church." And Commissar-General Schmidt, speaking in the Catholic province of Limburg, said: "We know quite well how to distinguish between a good shepherd who looks after his flock and the clergyman with political ambitions who abuses the pulpit to agitate against us." This statement made no more impression upon Church leaders than the clumsy efforts to advertise Germany as the "protector of European culture against Bolshevism," or the boggy-stories, intended to frighten the clergy, about Europe falling a prey to Communism in case of German defeat. The Churches by the stand they took clearly demonstrated that they were not only leading the people in resistance against Nazi paganism, but against German domination as well.

## VI

### THE CHURCHES ASSUME FULL NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

THE third of the main outside influences which contributed to the development of resistance in the occupied countries in 1941 was the political evolution in the United States. Every Hollander knew that America's policy of "all possible help short of war"



exasperated the Germans in an increasing measure as the amount of help was growing month by month. Thus in Holland, as in all the other occupied countries, the potentialities which the United States offered were a heartening factor in the year 1941 which, except for the first months, presented scant military solace.

Especially Protestant Church leaders in Holland were heartened by the favourable trend of affairs in the United States. In the years between the two World Wars there had been close co-operation between Dutch and American churchmen in the Federal Council of Churches. Before the war the Pilgrim Fathers Commemoration at Leyden, under the presidency of Prof. Eekhof, had created a bond between prominent American churchmen and leaders of the oecumenical movement in Holland. The Reformed Church in America, not identical with the "Nederlandsch Hervormde Kerk," but linked with it by many ties of tradition and origin, was in close touch with the leaders of Dutch Protestantism, and the Rev. Henry Beets, of the Christian Reformed Church in Michigan, entertained cordial relations with the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. It was encouraging for Dutch Protestants in the hard fight in which they were engaged, to know that this struggle was watched with much sympathy by the Protestants of so powerful a country as the United States. Dutch and American Christians had not forgotten the last oecumenical assembly which, on the eve of the war, had been held at Amsterdam, in July 1939. "This," says Henry P. van Dusen, "was the most widely representative gathering of Christians, or for that matter of men and women, which had ever come together. Its membership embraced 1,350 official delegates from 71 countries representing 220 separately organized religious bodies and national Churches." The Amsterdam meeting was a World Conference of Christian Youth; even in a world of peace it would have been a mighty inspiration for the youth in all participating countries to unite in a spirit of Christian fellowship; as it was it had inspired the youth of such countries as Holland and Norway with a heroic faith, of which they gave the most convincing evidence during the German occupation.

There is a close affinity between the spirit of Dutch and American Protestantism—partly, no doubt, in consequence of what Dutch colonists contributed in their time to the foundations of American civilization, and partly of the Calvinistic trends which prevailed in the early English settlements. This was another reason why, even in that very difficult year 1941, the trends in



the United States were so immensely important for those in Holland who were hoping against hope, and fighting without immediate prospects of victory. Subsequent developments brightened the outlook. In the course of 1941 America's efforts on behalf of the Allied nations grew stronger day by day; the whole attitude of public opinion in the United States underwent a gradual, but unmistakable, change to the Allies' advantage; Americans were actually beginning to co-operate with Britain, and finally with Holland as well, for the defence and safeguarding of the Western Hemisphere. All this gave great encouragement to the invaded nations at a time when even the bravest were badly in need of encouragement.

In the last months of America's non-belligerency the tension between the Churches and the occupation authorities steadily increased. In an earlier chapter we referred to the message of the Reformed Church, of September 1941, in which it counselled disobedience to all German decrees that were contrary to the laws of God—a message in which the injustices heaped upon the Jews were vigorously denounced. By that time the Germans had taken sweeping measures for the social Nazification of the country and the elimination of all Church influence from the life of the nation. In the previous months a great many individual cases had occurred of defiance by Catholic priests and laymen. Priests had openly admonished the faithful not to read those newspapers which were sponsored by the enemy, and one of those papers had written in a bitter mood that Brabant was “under the rule of political Roman Catholicism.” There also had been an increasing number of refusals to grant church burials to nominal Catholics who had been members of the National Socialist movement, and among the minor but highly characteristic incidents was a scathing anti-Nazi sermon preached by a priest in the diocese of Breda.

But the isolated facts, however important in themselves, were overshadowed by the great general conflict which resulted from Seyss-Inquart's decision to form a Labour front after the German pattern. The Christian and Catholic Trade Unions having declined to join the newly formed National Unions, had been placed under the leadership of a Dutch renegade called H. J. Woudenberg, one of the most unscrupulous tools of the German invaders. This meant total ruin to the confessional Trade Union Movement, which was one of the main foundations of Christian social life in Holland. The German authorities, accustomed to meek surrender in their own country, had apparently expected



that Christian leaders in Holland would not dare to oppose even the most intolerable measures. On August 3, 1941, a Pastoral Letter, signed by Archbishop J. de Jong of Utrecht and the four bishops of Haarlem's Hertogenbosch, and Roermond, was read from all pulpits as a protest against interference with Catholic trade unions.

This historical document was, if not a declaration of war, the acceptance of a challenge which the leaders of the Church could not ignore without renouncing their claim to Catholic leadership. Yet it was more than that. It was a vindication of the nation's right to have its institutions left intact and to live according to its own standards, so far as these did not interfere with the occupier's military interests. It was a protest against the enemy's attempt to impose his "order" on the nation whose country he had invaded, but whose will to be free he could not subdue.

After recalling various injustices suffered by the Catholics, the bishops declared that "the Roman Catholic Workers' Union and affiliated unions were ruined, and their moral and religious task made impossible." They stressed the obvious point that Catholic society could not be under the administration of persons "whose spiritual outlook was in flat contradiction to the Catholic attitude." The Workers' Union, the bishops complained, had been pressed into the service of National Socialism, and become one of its organizations. Hence Catholics could no longer remain members. Although up to that date membership in affiliated National Socialist organizations was forbidden, it did not, like membership of the Nazi Party, entail exclusion from the sacraments. "The development of the situation, however, is such," continued the bishops in their letter, "that membership in these affiliated bodies must be considered just as inadmissible as membership in the National Socialist movement itself. Therefore, the sacraments must be refused to those who remain members of one of the organizations affiliated with the Workers' Union in its new form and all other bodies affiliated with the National Socialist Party." Deep sorrow was expressed by the bishops over the ruin of the Catholic Workers' Union, whose 200,000 members included well-known priests and laymen "who had put their full energy into fostering a union which did an immense amount of good in the social and religious fields." "Openly and loudly we raise our voice against the injustice done to these tens of thousands of persons by robbing them of their social status," the letter went on. "We protest against the moral constraint and the attempt to force upon



them a conception of life conflicting with their religious convictions." Referring to those union leaders who resisted the new measure, the bishops said: "We are proud of the men who revealed, in most difficult circumstances, that they have those qualities which made our nation great. They may suffer hardships, but we are convinced that their brethren will not fail them in their hour of distress."

A remarkable but perhaps somewhat over-emphasized feature of this letter was a reference to a Pastoral issued by the twenty-nine bishops of Germany on July 6th, in which they refused, in the name of the German Catholics, to choose between Christ and the German people, as demanded in a book widely distributed throughout the Reich. "We are at one with our German brethren in the Episcopate," the Dutch bishops said. "On July 6th all twenty-nine bishops of the German Reich declared that the issue is the life or death of Christianity and the Church in Germany. Dear brethren, we have nothing to add to these words; they are ours also."

Interesting as this reference to the German bishops' letter is as an indication of growing solidarity between Christians even of nations which are fighting this war in opposite camps, and important as it may have been as a tactical move of the Dutch bishops, it is not wholly relevant to the Dutch case, and might even give rise to misunderstanding. Any solidarity there may have been between Dutch and German bishops remained restricted to their opposition to those Nazi measures which were incompatible with the vital interests of the Catholic communities in both countries. But whereas the German bishops protest against actions of their lawful national authorities, the Dutch protest was directed against the invaders of Holland; against alien and enemy rulers who abused their power to corrupt national institutions over which, as temporary conquerors, they had no legal or moral authority. They had, indeed, the right to suspend these institutions—but not to replace them by others of their own making. It should be kept in mind that in this, as in many other cases, Dutch and German churchmen may have condemned certain anti-religious activities of the Nazi rulers for the same reasons, but that their positions with regard to these rulers are widely different. Dutch churchmen are leading national resistance against a foreign enemy and oppressor; unlike the opposition of the German bishops (who never for a moment protested against the invasion of Holland, or against the unspeakable cruelties com-



mitted by the Germans in the invaded countries) the resistance of the Dutch bishops is not purely "ideological," but first of all national and patriotic. The struggle is a battle for freedom and liberation, and as a freedom is the life-blood of religion, the Churches are in the front rank of the fighters.

This is well illustrated by the attitude of the Protestant Churches with regard to an issue in which no point of Christian morals or principle was involved, and on which they might have compromised without becoming untrue to their duties as guardians of the nation's religious integrity. As early as the first winter of the occupation the Germans decreed that before a certain date the Churches should hand in complete statements of all funds received from collections in and outside the churches. Obviously the Germans intended to appropriate a large proportion of these funds for their "Winter help," which they had decided to introduce in Holland. Even years before Hitler came to power the "Winterhilfe" had been a doubtful form of charity in a country whose charitable institutions, including those of the Churches, were almost devoid of funds because the average German, under whatever régime, was never of a generous character. Under the Nazis, however, all charitable impulses were dogmatically condemned as un-German signs of weakness; moreover, charity exercised by ecclesiastical and other institutions was deemed dangerous because it might endear those institutions to the beneficiaries of their support. Where help was needed it had to be given solely from the State treasury. As under a totalitarian system no account is rendered of the funds received and spent for charitable or any other purposes, this presented an unrivalled opportunity for extorting additional money from the general public under the pretext of public assistance. The "Winterhilfe" was by far the largest and most corrupt of Germany's public collections. Most of the proceeds were spent on armaments and other works of "national importance." Although everybody in Germany was perfectly aware of this fact, people offered their money meekly as an additional tax, realizing that it might be extremely dangerous to defy the collectors, and that the safest thing to do was to pretend ignorance as to the real aim of the "Winterhilfe."

Again the Germans assumed that what they had so successfully achieved in their own country, could be undertaken with the same prospect of success in occupied Holland. Again they overlooked the immense difference between the independent and critical character of the average Dutchman and the dumb pliability of



the average German in his attitude towards his masters. When the Dutch Churches had been ordered to send statements regarding their collections to the Germans, the General Synod of Protestant Churches decided that no interference by the State could be tolerated in such collections "which represent the sacrifices of our communities and are an integral part of our Christian religion." Yet it should be emphasized that if, under normal Dutch government, such a measure had been taken, the Churches would indeed have protested and done their utmost to have it rescinded; it might even have caused a great political crisis, but there would probably not have been any deliberate and organized disobedience in face of a measure decided upon and approved by legal authorities who were subject to democratic control. In this case, however, the regulation was imposed by a foreign oppressor, whose aim obviously was to render impossible the charitable task of the Churches, and to appropriate the largest possible amount of money for his own purposes. The Synod, therefore, requested all its congregations not to send the required statements to the German authorities, and with the notable exception of the Lutherans, all Protestant communities complied with this request. The Germans then forbade collections all through the country, but the Reformed Churches simply ignored this prohibition and collections continued as if nothing had happened.

In connection with this controversy a great many clergymen were arrested by the Germans who, however, did not yet dare to attack the Church openly, and engineered charges against the prisoners which were far removed from the real reasons for their incarceration. By their strong and uncompromising attitude the Church leaders gained the full moral confidence even of thousands of those who had never professed any special faith, but who in those days of distress were immensely impressed with the strength and courage inspired by so unshakable a faith.

It was not only the need of prayer and meditation within the hallowed walls of their churches which drew the people in greater numbers than ever before to divine service. The Church had become again what it had been in former times of national tribulation; the one place where people could listen to brave and defiant words, publicly spoken, and echoing their deepest sentiments and true convictions. There was a great risk in speaking out boldly, but the servants of God took that risk. The Church would not have been a true Church if its ministers had lacked the courage to identify it fully with the hopes, the desires, and the agonies of the people. The pulpit again became the national rostrum. It was



from the pulpits that the flocks, Sunday after Sunday, heard the words that prepared them for resistance and sacrifice.

As time went on, an increasing number of ministers of the Gospel had to pay for their boldness with their freedom, and it was realized that there was a danger of the Church being gradually deprived of its most undaunted leaders. In order to avoid disorganization and confusion in the parishes in case of sudden arrest of their minister, the clergy themselves encouraged the formation of laymen apostolates, so that a body of well-instructed laymen could carry on in case of the minister being taken away.

One of the most prominent of the many Church leaders who were imprisoned in the course of 1941 was Dr. K. H. E. Gravemeyer, Secretary of the Dutch Reformed Church Synod. He was arrested in midsummer for drafting a synodal message refusing co-operation with the Germans; a message which was to have been read from the pulpits of all Protestant churches. It should be added that after some time Dr. Gravemeyer was freed, only to be rearrested during the summer of 1942, when he was sent to a concentration camp, from which he was released in February 1943. His imprisonment had by no means the effect which the Germans had hoped for; far from weakening the unity of the Churches, it stiffened their combined resistance to German interference. Hardly less shocking than the arrest of Dr. Gravemeyer were those of Professor Hendrik Kraemer, one of the lights of Leyden University, a mission leader of international fame, and Chairman of the Youth Commission of the Dutch Reformed Churches, and of Professor Paul Scholten, the Chairman of the Advisory Council of the Church.

Although in retrospect it may appear that spiritual resistance in 1941 culminated in the Pastoral Letter of August 3rd, in which the Catholic bishops denounced the destruction of Christian trade unionism by the Germans, it would be wrong to assume that that struggle in that year was confined to a limited number of issues which happened to come into relief as a consequence of the protests registered by either Catholic or Protestant Church leaders. The struggle, on the contrary, was carried on along the whole line.

The Germans had killed denominational trade unionism together with the non-denominational trade union movement, and were going to kill Christian education in order to impose the Nazi system of education upon the people. The curriculum of the preparatory, secondary, and high schools was changed in order to bring it "up to date." Co-education of Jewish and Gentile children was to cease. German control of the universities of



Leyden and Delft was to be tightened. A special institute for the education of "selected youths" was opened. Although no special measures were taken in 1941 against denominational schools, this was no atmosphere in which they could possibly hope to remain unmolested. The framework of national education, of which Christian education was an integral part, was on the way to being destroyed. The Secretary General of Education was empowered by the Germans to close denominational schools and dismiss or suspend their teachers, "if conditions necessitated such action." Around the middle of August 1941 the Secretary General, Professor J. van Dam, in a broadcast said: "A spirit of resistance, which sometimes can be ascribed to teachers who do not understand the new times, has been noticeable among the youth of the Netherlands. This cannot be tolerated." And he added that Seyss-Inquart had given him authority to take severe measures against the religious schools "in case of proved unwillingness." It is true that denominational schools were allowed to remain in existence, but only as long as their curricula were "propelled in such direction that the younger generation could obtain a sound knowledge of the ideals of the new times."

In the last months of 1941 a state of tension prevailed which bordered on open warfare. The whole international picture had undergone a complete change which deeply affected the Netherlands. The Dutch Government had promptly declared its unflinching opposition to the Japanese Empire. This promptness gave Dutchmen all over the world intense satisfaction, but nowhere was it hailed with more enthusiasm than in occupied Holland, where the Government's example stimulated a new aggressiveness. Besides, active participation of the United States in the war had the most far-reaching moral effects. The war had become a global war now; whatever hard blows might be in store for the United Nations, nobody could any longer doubt the final outcome now that the hard-trying but undefeated and increasing forces of the British and Russian Empires were joined by the fresh and inexhaustible resources of the United States.

At the same time the leaders of the Churches in Holland and the German occupation authorities were at daggers drawn. By November the German-controlled newspapers, enraged by the opposition of the Catholic bishops and their complete indifference to the "fight against Bolshevism," abandoned themselves to the most vehement attacks on the Dutch hierarchy. "The bishops," wrote one of them, "want to maintain their ridiculous, proud attitude, thinking that they alone hold the key to salvation. As



prelates they may not be vulnerable, but when they sympathize with saboteurs and thwarted liars, and continue to show animosity against those defending Holland with their lives (meaning the few hundreds of Dutch soldiers who had allowed themselves to be dispatched to the Russian front), they will be despised and finally removed."

A little later the same paper violently attacked one of the most illustrious Dutch preachers, the famous Dominican Father Henri de Greeve, for one of his "five-minute sermons," which he published in *Katholieke Illustratie*, one of the few Catholic weeklies which was still allowed to appear. The sermon—the paper declared—"preaches pure negativism and anti-Nazi activity. Negativists are as dangerous as moths. This priest should not be allowed to write any more in the *Katholieke Illustratie* which, despite the paper shortage, is still generously allowed to appear." At the same time the Nazi paper bitterly complained of pastors who, instead of preaching on topics such as "Children: love one another" (obviously meaning "love the Germans") or "Sacrifice" (meaning, of course, sacrifice for the "New Order"), constantly devoted their sermons to the discussion of "These distressing times," "The heavy trials to be faced," "The great sorrows in our hearts," "The danger threatening," which the paper characterized as "Jerusalem sob-stuff." "The trials," it added, "are never defined, and so the congregations are left to draw their own conclusions."

As the year 1941 drew to a close it became clear that the great struggle was still to come, and that it could not be long delayed. German tyranny might have terrible things in store for the people of the Netherlands, and the new year might witness worse oppression and worse cruelties even than had been endured for twenty endless months, but the people were more firmly united than in the first period of confusion, more consciously ready to fight, and more determined to see it through to the bitter end. From that time on it is often difficult to distinguish between the resistance which found its origin in the leadership of the Churches and that general resistance which was carried on through so-called underground movements and finally pervaded the whole Dutch community. The Germans, in their impotent rage, killed, destroyed, tortured with ever-increasing fury, only to find that after every new wanton crime resistance stiffened. But through all those months the leadership of the Churches and their unifying power were dominating factors in the marshalling of all forces of resistance. There was, by the end of 1941, "far closer collaboration



than the Protestant Churches had ever known, both with Roman Catholics and among themselves, and ever firmer speech and more determined action," writes Mr. van Dusen. "The Church continues to speak. Indeed its witness has become clearer and richer." And he quotes in corroboration the pronouncement of a young Dutch churchman, "There is once more a Church in Holland. It is by no means a perfect Church. . . . But it is a Church on the way towards being the *ecclesia militans*. What most of us in our unbelief had considered impossible, has happened. God has sent His breath on the dry bones and we have once more a Mother Church which gives us guidance and consolation, and which holds up our hands in the struggle, which is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers of the darkness of this world."

## VII

### UNDAUNTED STRUGGLE FOR NATIONAL INTEGRITY

THE year 1942 was to be a year of hard trials and crushing blows for the United Nations, but also, in its later course, a year of recuperation and budding hopes. The very gallant fight put up by the Dutch Navy in Indian waters against the Japanese, cannot have failed to hearten the people in occupied Holland. On the other hand, they must have felt the loss of Java and nearly the whole Dutch East Indian Archipelago as a heavy blow. But although the outcome of military and naval operations in the southern Pacific was discouraging, the Dutch had the satisfaction of noting the keen disappointment of the Germans with the meagre advantages they drew from the Japanese alliance, and of realizing that Japanese victories left the position of the occupied European countries practically untouched.

The hated intruders provided an excellent political barometer in their outward reaction to current events. The average German, being of a nervous and choleric temper, is rather bad at concealing his feelings when things are taking a turn for the worse. He seldom has his nerves sufficiently under control in times of adversity. The public in Holland could measure the failure of the German offensive against the Russians by the degree of depression among the occupying forces. Their nervousness betrayed the devastating losses at Stalingrad, their troubled faces despaired at the prospect of another war winter.

When British and, at a later stage, American airmen unloaded



bombs over Germany's industrial centres, in hitherto unknown quantities, the Dutch knew, better than any other people, what these raids really meant to the German population. By tens of thousands German women and children were evacuated from the stricken areas to the comparative safety of Holland. These unwelcome guests, in spite of themselves, told the story of the German people's terrible ordeal. For twenty months the Dutch had seen only victorious, arrogant Germans. Now they saw them stricken, cowering, war-weary, beaten. No Dutchmen could any longer believe in the myth of German invincibility after having seen so many in the throes of abject fear and panic and despair.

As the fortunes of war turned against them, the Germans grew more ferocious in their attempts to subjugate the entire Dutch community to the perfection of their war machine. In 1942 tens of thousands of Dutchmen were forced to labour in Germany, Poland, and other German-dominated territories; large districts, mostly along the seaboard, were evacuated in order to be put into a state of defence against possible invasion; hostages were captured by the hundreds and many of them killed; the last remaining vestiges of individual freedom were destroyed as far as they could be destroyed in a country which was ready for every sacrifice to remain free; thousands of families were dispersed; virtual slavery was introduced, and the hundred and sixty thousand Jews of the Netherlands were expelled from their dwellings, chased from province to province, herded into concentration camps, and carried off by wagonloads, like cattle, to the German slaughterhouses in Poland. It was a year of hunger, cold, sickness, and untold misery; a year in which thousands who otherwise might have lived for many years to come were doomed to perish; a year in which the Germans, frantic at the knowledge that there was no escape from ultimate defeat and retribution, gave free rein to their lust for torture and destruction, relishing the endless sufferings they inflicted.

But never for a moment did the spirit of resistance weaken in the course of that most terrible year. As news trickles through to the free countries about the fight carried on by the invaded nations, it is realized by only a few what it really means. It is a continual fight, without an hour's rest, without an hour's safety. Battered warriors in this struggle cannot be sent home to recuperate; they cannot be sent behind the front line in order to gather new strength. They can only be sent to concentration camps and into death. Their home is their front line and their front line is their home. Among them are the highest and the



humblest. Their end may come any day, any minute. When they are wounded, no Red Cross nurses them. When they are captured, their fate is in the hands of turnkeys recruited from the scum of Nazidom. They know it, but they are ready for the ultimate sacrifice.

Although the Press was firmly under German control, and could hardly be considered a Dutch institution, those papers which, like the Calvinist *Standaard*, used to circulate mainly among religious people could not wholly ignore the Christian aspect of life as they might otherwise have lost even the remnants of their shrunken following. On December 29, 1941, the *Standaard* attacked what it somewhat vaguely called "revolutionary law," but it was clear to every reader that it really meant the Nazi legislation, which the Germans were gradually introducing in Holland.

"Law originates with God, who uses man to carry it out," the paper declared. "That which does not originate with God cannot be called law, because it is mere arbitrariness, which is predestined to go up in smoke." Arguing that a revolutionary has never been able to create law, because as soon as he loses the support of brute force his "law" turns out to be "mere words on paper," the *Standaard* concluded: "Since law is man's work, it cannot be perfect, but the citizens and the authorities should obey the prevailing law, while the legislators must follow the constitution."

Some days later, on January 10, 1942, a writer in the same paper likened the Nazi régime, in parable form, to heathen Babylon: "In spite of God's promise of Jerusalem's victory, Jerusalem was given into the hands of Babylon. Babylon has a long history of evil. It removes the treasures from the temple and brings the Holy Vessel into the temple of the Babylonian God who aided the triumph over Jerusalem's God. But the end of the path of Providence is the triumph of God's Kingdom."

There were, in the first weeks of 1942, many instances of such arguments, which gave the general public veiled directions as to their attitude in the next and more violent stage of the struggle. The Germans were obviously becoming alarmed by preparations for open revolt. In the newspapers they published warnings concerning "severest consequences" to persons found in the possession of firearms, explosives, poison sprayers, daggers, camping-knives, brass knuckles, and rubber truncheons.

It was in these days that the Nazis, for the first time since they occupied Holland, arrested Roman Catholic churchmen and



scholars of outstanding reputation, among them the famous Carmelite Father Dr. Titus Brandsma, a professor at the Roman Catholic University of Nijmegen, who was imprisoned in Germany, and the Carmelite F. van der Mey, professor of philosophy at a well-known seminary in the province of Limburg, whom the Germans sent to a concentration camp, and Dr. Hein Hoeben, a director of the International Catholic Press Bureau, who died in a concentration camp as a consequence of serious ill-treatment.

In the meantime Protestant and Catholic Church leaders, fully recognizing the seriousness of the situation, sent on February 17th a joint delegation to Seyss-Inquart, which, according to the words of its spokesman, represented "every Christian Church in Holland." They admonished Seyss-Inquart to "recognize in the name of God the spiritual distress of the Netherlands people and to avoid doing further harm," and handed him a memorandum which stated that "the Churches are once more compelled to utter their emphatic and most serious objections to the present development of events. Without entering politics, they yet must raise their voice when the principles of justice and charity are being denied. The Churches would be forsaking their duty towards the authorities if they, representing the majority of the population, did not express their anxiety about the feeling of tension that is increasing among all classes of the Dutch people." The document referred to "almost complete lawlessness," which deprived so many people of their personal freedom for an unlimited time, and transported them without trial or condemnation to "camps or elsewhere." It was this memorandum which contained the renewed protest against the deportations of Jews which at that time were still in their initial stage.

Seyss-Inquart's reply was a mixture of German impudence, arrogance, dishonesty, and deceit, but the delegation's spokesman, by no means discomfited, squarely expressed his dissatisfaction with the Commissioner's answers, reminding him that when he took office in May 1940 he had solemnly declared that he would leave the foundations of Dutch life intact. It is not likely that the Church leaders had expected any real result from their protest, which they must have deemed necessary as a matter of conscience, and in order to be fully justified in any more drastic steps they might feel compelled to take in the near future.

That the Catholic leaders at any rate had entertained no illusions as to Seyss-Inquart's willingness to make any concession to justice or even common decency as a result of this interview, follows from the text of a joint Lenten Letter, which was read



five days later in all Catholic churches and chapels and which had, of course, been prepared some time before. The fact that a joint Pastoral was issued emphasized the intense national importance which the bishops attached to the whole issue. They admonished the faithful "to be ready, armed with truth, justice, and responsiveness to the Gospel of Peace" against a menace which "becomes stronger as the pressure on us increases." Gratification was expressed because "tendencies and aspirations which offer a serious menace to Christian faith and morals" had been so far withstood—this being obviously an allusion to the refusal of the vast majority of Catholic labour to join the new Nazified trade unions—but at the same time it was deplored that "many means of spreading, deepening, and defending our faith are taken away." After quoting from the Epistle of St. Paul, "May the gift of words be given me; may I continue to be outspoken which is my duty," the Lenten Letter concluded: "Only Christianity with its faith in a personal God, with its firm moral law as sanctioned by God, and with its urgent commands of justice and charity, possesses the guarantee for a healthy social order."

The Reformed Churches followed eight weeks later with a letter which was read from all Reformed pulpits on April 19, 1942. "Great concern is felt within the Church," the message said, "over the way in which the three basic principles of our life—justice, charity, and freedom of conscience—are being violated. . . . Lately the Germans have encroached upon the domain of Christian education, and deprived it of its organs, the Joint Council of Religious Schools and the Society for Christian Education. . . . There are, besides, many other examples revealing that work, founded on the Gospel, is becoming increasingly involved in the heavy struggle wherein many have sacrificed their personal freedom."

Catholic school authorities were adamant in their refusal to have anything to do with the attempts to introduce a Nazi-German educational system. When the chief inspector of schools for the two southern provinces, which are predominantly Catholic, discussed with seventeen of his inspectors the possibility of "demanding complete co-operation in training for the New Order, instead of clinging to flabby neutrality, passive resistance, and sabotage," he was supported by only one of them. The spokesman of the sixteen others declared: "We are confirmed Catholics. We have taken an oath on the constitution to which we shall remain true. We shall never do anything contrary to our convictions as Catholics."



In these manifold conflicts between the Churches and the German authorities the large majority of Dutch non-believers invariably sided with the Churches, although they had never before been friends of denominational schools or Christian trade unions, and may even, before the war, have been openly hostile to a "sectarism" which, in their opinion, had become a national symbol; interest in the Churches had enormously increased, and the religious mentality—if not as yet religion itself—was taken seriously by many of those who formerly had ignored or even ridiculed it. Others who, in the past, would never have shown themselves with Christian symbols, started to wear a small cross when it became clear that this enraged the Germans and their confederates. It may rightly be argued that it is not in accordance with the Christian spirit to wear Christian symbols in order to annoy even our worst enemies; yet there are few who will wear a symbol without becoming susceptible to the spirit it represents, and a powerful current of national solidarity may lead to a remarkable increase of Christian solidarity as well.

The wearing of small crosses started in the fall of 1941, after a Catholic paper at The Hague had appealed to Roman Catholics to wear them visibly "so that good Catholics would be able to recognize each other as such." This, to be sure, was by no means intended as a demonstration against non-Catholics, as is evident from what a chronicler of events in occupied Holland wrote last year: "This idea spread swiftly and the little crosses began to be generally looked upon as *the* anti-Nazi symbol. The result has been that not only Catholics but patriots of all other creeds or political convictions are now wearing a small cross."

In April 1942 the National Socialist weekly *Volk en Vaderland*, one of the vilest servants of Teutonism in Holland, wrote in a fit of rage: "Every reactionary wears a cross. . . . All family members are decorated with it and even school children have it pinned to their clothes. They are birds of greatly varying plumage who wear these crosses; among them you may find free-thinkers, anti-Papists, Jews, and members of the dissolved Marxist and communist parties."

Although the moral leadership of the clergy was of the greatest value and sustained more than anything else the national will to resist the enemy, the people by no means followed their spiritual leaders indiscriminately. The pastor of a rural parish in the province of South Holland announced one day that he had become a member of the Dutch Nazi movement. The following Sunday not a single parishioner attended his service. According



to an Amsterdam paper the Church elders ignored the letters in which he convened them to a special meeting in order to discuss the situation, and finally the Germanized pastor was compelled to apply for his pension. His successor chose for his first sermon the text: "From this tree thou shalt not eat."

## VIII

### OPEN HOSTILITY BETWEEN THE CHURCHES AND THE GERMANS

THE letter issued by the Reformed Church enraged the Germans and at once they sought revenge. Not daring as yet to cool their fury upon the powerful Church itself, they followed the favourite device of all bullies and cowards and set upon the weak and defenceless. They started to round up the many thousands of foreign Jews who had taken refuge in Holland after the Nazi régime had been established in Germany. They deported them to Eastern Europe, where slavery, torture, and annihilation awaited them. The political status of most of these Jews was indefinite. They were not Dutch citizens; many of them had no official nationality at all, but the large majority, although deprived of all their rights of German citizenship, were still technically subjects of the Reich. Therefore little could be done in their interest. But then, in July, the Germans extended their measures of deportation to many thousands of Dutch Jews. This was a very different matter altogether. These Jews were an integral part of the Dutch population; most of them were the offspring of many generations of Dutch-Jewish citizens. Their deportation was a challenge to the nation as a whole. At once the Protestant and Catholic Churches sent a joint petition to Air General Friedrich Christiansen, German Military Commander in the Netherlands, and insisted upon more just and humane treatment for the Jews, while a flaming protest was read in all churches.

This time they approached the military commander and not the Reich Commissioner, Seyss-Inquart, because the former was still—for some obscure reason—supposed to possess a certain degree of chivalry and honour, which, in spite of the unspeakable horrors of Warsaw and Rotterdam and the French and Belgian countryside, were still considered attributes of German officers. But the Air General did not appreciate the implied compliment. He simply ordered Commissioner Schmidt, who at that time



acted as the Reich Commissioner's deputy, to announce that "the Jews cannot stay in Holland" and that "within a short time one of their strongest bastions would have been cleared away," adding: "They will return to the place they came from, just as poor as when they left it, covered with lice. Those sympathizing with them will be treated in the same way."

The ferocious German reign of terror against the Jews of the occupied European countries was one of the most horrible features of the year 1943. Undoubtedly the plight of the Jews in some of the other countries, notably in Poland, which had become the great German slaughterhouse of European Jewry, was even more desperate than in Holland. In Western Europe, and especially in Holland, the Jews were an integral part of the population. The extermination of the Dutch Jews was, therefore, an unpardonable act of hostility against the nation as a whole and, paradoxical as it may seem, the greatest challenge to the Christian conscience of the Dutch.

"The Jewish Star has the honour of uniting Protestants and Catholics," exclaimed the completely Germanized Nazi-weekly *Volk en Vaderland* in one of its May issues, and about the same time another Dutch paper in the service of the enemy stated that Catholic and Protestant preachers, especially the Calvinists, were inciting the people against the Nazis week after week. Another major conflict between the Germans and the Churches was provoked by the introduction of Labour Conscription. Up to April one could "voluntarily" enlist for labour service, but the number of persons who had volunteered to work in the newly completed Dutch labour camps was far from sufficient. The whole system of labour camps was so thoroughly German that, were it only for this reason, the average Dutchman declined to have anything to do with it, apart even from the suspicion that it had been introduced as a means to exploit the Dutch workers in the interests of the German war production. On April 1st a decree, was issued, ordering all men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four to register for "voluntary" labour service before January 1st, it being added that those who failed to sign up would be excluded from Civil Service posts. Those who had entered the Civil Service before the decree was issued must do their labour service within a year, or be dismissed. Moreover, all those who were not "usefully employed, or unemployed, and students who had no professional training," were called up for this "voluntary service."

The next month both the Catholic bishops and the Reformed



Church issued warnings against enlistment with the labour service. The impression which these warnings produced was described as "tremendous"; they were clear admonitions by the ecclesiastical leaders to disobey the orders issued by the occupation authorities. In the Pastoral Letter, which was read in Catholic churches throughout the country, it was said: "The labour service promised that no one would be prevented from practising religion, but officially it was stated that the labour service can only be National Socialist. This fills us with regret and concern. The views of National Socialism are in direct conflict with Christianity and are the most serious threat to Christian faith and morals. That is why a labour service with Nazi aims is a great danger to youth."

The Press in the service of the enemy was furious. "Many clergymen abuse German leniency," wrote one paper, "by open incitement in their churches, by praying for the Queen and the House of Orange, and by skilfully chosen texts and still more skilful explanations. The Protestant clergy support underground movements. They help the capitalistic-Bolshevik propaganda in their fight against the occupying power." And of the Catholic clergy the same paper complained that they were "organizing resistance behind the safe walls of the Church."

A Nazi magazine attacked both the Protestant and Catholic clergy for stirring up discontent among the people of the Netherlands. "The non-co-operative attitude of the clergy becomes increasingly more open," it complained. "Priests and ministers seem to be competing in veiled incitement against those now ruling the country. One day the authorities will cease to be lenient, and then hard blows will fall and the Germans will be accused of religious persecution." The paper cited as an instance of clerical revolt, the case of a priest praying for a colleague who had died while imprisoned by the Germans, a "crime" rendered worse by the fact that "this was not the first time that this priest had prayed for another who had not returned from captivity."

A strong stand was taken by Archbishop de Jong, of Utrecht, in the late spring of 1942, against the German-sponsored "Netherlands Union of Health Insurance Physicians," a subsidiary of the Nazified "Netherlands Chamber of Physicians," which was shunned by all reputable physicians in Holland. The Archbishop issued a letter in support of an appeal by "medical circles" to boycott the Union, which "would be used to infiltrate Nazi principles into the spheres of medicine and public health."

The Churches could not take up so strong and consistent an attitude without running heavy risks. The Protestant ministers



and the lower Catholic clergy found their main—although in many cases inadequate—protection in the enthusiastic support which was extended to them not only by their own followers, but by the large majority of the general public. The Germans had to go warily if they did not want to unchain general violence and revolt. Yet the Churches were subjected to a terroristic system of cold-blooded persecution. A Catholic theologian, who escaped from the occupied territory and arrived in England in June 1942, told a London interviewer of the sufferings inflicted upon priests and laymen alike. Many members of the clergy—he told—were confined in concentration-camps, while others had been heavily fined for obstructionist activities. Even the bishops did not remain wholly unmolested. Mgr. J. H. G. Lemmens, Bishop of Roermond, in the province of Limburg, was mentioned as an example. As he had opposed several German measures he was deprived of the use of several rooms in his residence, which the Germans turned into storerooms for petrol. The Catholic University at Nijmegen was singled out for specially severe measures. Its rector and chancellor and one of its professors were in prison, and it was blackmailed into paying the equivalent of £61,250 for the “privilege” of continuing its courses, which it was only allowed to do under strict German supervision. The Nazis also made repeated attempts to prevent Pastoral Letters from being read and published, but these efforts failed, as such messages were not only sent to the presbyteries but also to some responsible parishioner, whose duty it was to transmit them to the local priest. Of course, this involved a good deal of personal risk, but the system worked well; and it is not known that the Germans have ever been able to suppress either pastorals or public messages from Protestant Church leaders.

## IX

### THE RUSSIAN ISSUE

ON September 11th, on the eve of the Hebrew New Year (5703), Dr. P. S. Gerbrandy, the head of the Netherlands Government in London, spoke over the wireless to the people in the occupied country, and called upon them to continue resistance against the German plan to deport all Dutch Jews “so that none would be left by July 1, 1943.”

Alluding to the help, so generously extended to the victims of German persecution, the Prime Minister expressed his gratitude that “the flower of charity blooms more beautifully than ever in



darkened Europe. From all countries where the oppressor threatens to trample down civilization and humanity there come reports that the populations attempt to protect helpless victims against the German hordes—often at the sacrifice of their own lives.” He recalled how, in February 1941, the indignant population of Holland had replied to the first anti-Jewish measures with widespread strikes and continued: “The forced deportation of all Jewish Dutchmen to Poland has now been ordered. The enemy has announced that no Jew will be left in the Netherlands after July 1, 1943. The time has not yet come to speak publicly of the way in which the Dutch people resist this barbarism, risking their lives and safety to frustrate the satanic Nazi plan. But when finally everything that has been done to assist those unfortunates reaches the full light of day, the world will see how Holland has served her historic traditions of religious liberty and tolerance with unshaken loyalty.”

One attempt that has come to light can be quoted here. It is a “letter of protest” distributed mainly among members of the Protestant and Catholic Churches, with the request to each recipient to send it to the commander of the German armies in the Netherlands, Air General Friedrich Christiansen. Here follow some of its highlights:

“General—In utter desperation, I, a Netherlander, address you, who are the representative of the German field armies. . . . The deportation of our Jewish fellow-countrymen to Silesia and the Protectorate deepens the gulf between your people and ours to such an extent that it can never again be bridged. . . . Because we feel brutally attacked in our human dignities, in the honour and traditions of our people, and in our Christian beliefs, we request you, General, as representative of the German Armies, to respect that honour and that belief and to use your influence to prevent the relentless deportation measures. We feel the maltreatment of our Jewish fellow-citizens as our own. But our suffering will not break us. We have been beaten on the field of battle, but you know from the history of your own people that a military defeat is not sufficient to enslave a nation. . . . We therefore call upon you for your intervention, in the name of justice and of Christian love, for the sake of our Jewish fellow-countrymen and for the future of Europe. It is not to our shame that we are sending you this letter anonymously. It is the fault of those who punish every utterance of insulted humanity and injured national dignity with execution, concentration camp, or prison.—(Signed) A Netherlander.”



What part the Protestant and Catholic Church leaders had in the composition and circulation of this remarkable document is not clear, but that the Germans held them responsible may be concluded from passages in a speech delivered on August 2, 1942, by Deputy Commissioner Schmidt. "The Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches," he said, "have addressed to the military commander, General Christiansen, a request for the better treatment of the Jews. The Jews are Germany's most dangerous enemies. Dutchmen cannot actively defend themselves against them while looking through spectacles of silly humanitarian sentiment. Owing to the passivity of the Dutch, we Germans have taken over the solution of the Jewish question and have started to send the Jews to the east. . . ." In another passage Schmidt said: "In the Catholic churches a document was read criticizing the anti-Jewish measures taken to safeguard our struggle. Apparently it was also read in the Protestant churches, although Protestant circles say it was not intended to be read everywhere publicly. Because of this the Germans must consider the 'Roman Catholic Jews' their worst enemies and arrange for their quickest possible transport to the east. They try, by pamphlets and radio, to incite Dutchmen. . . ."

German bitterness against the Churches is convincing evidence of the leading part they took in fostering resistance. "Dutch bishops are the fiercest enemies of the Nazi New Order in Europe," exclaimed the *Essener National Zeitung*, Hermann Goering's paper, in one of its September issues, adding that "in the new world the Church must translate the Gospel into a new language." At the same time *Volk en Vaderland*, the weekly paper of the National Socialist Movement in Holland, declared that "these people simply ask for religious persecution"—an effusion which was called forth by a sermon preached by a Dominican Father in the Jesuit Church of St. Joseph, at Nijmegen, who had asked for generous contributions for the poor, while referring to the German-sponsored Winter Relief as a scheme planned by "people without faith making a collection for political ideas without design." The paper concluded: "Surely, there is a place for this kind of Jewish-workers-without Stars (of David) in concentration camps."

About the same time a local Nazi leader, addressing a meeting in the important industrial town of Eindhoven, stated: "We have to organize meetings throughout occupied Holland because ministers preach each [Sunday about many things which are very bad for the Dutch." *Morgenbladet*, a Stockholm paper, re-



ported on October 6th that seventy Dutch clergymen had been imprisoned by the German authorities.

The complete German failure to exploit the Nazi-Bolshevik antithesis in such a way that religious circles at least would find themselves morally bound to praise Germany as the champion of western culture against the "Red menace," enhanced the bitterness of the strife between the Churches and the occupation authorities. A split in the national front would have been a deadly blow, not only to the cause of Dutch resistance, but to the political prestige of the Netherlands Government in London, which is composed of members of the main political parties, including Socialists as well as Calvinists and Catholics. After the Queen and the Prime Minister had cordially welcomed the Russians in the Allied ranks, it would have been a boon to the Germans if the Protestant and Catholic clergy and political leaders in Holland had emphatically taken the opposite view. Nothing of the sort, however, happened. On July 10th, an agreement was signed in London, restoring diplomatic relations between Russia and the Netherlands, which had been broken off when the Bolsheviks seized power in 1917. On this occasion Prime Minister Gerbrandy said in a radio talk to the people of Holland:

"Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union created feelings of solidarity between the Russians and the people of Holland—feelings which have now been officially sealed. The joint resolution is an outward manifestation of the alliance brought about at the hour when the Russian people with grim determination turned on the common enemy and by virtue of their unequalled courage and self-sacrifice halted the enemy in its almost irresistible onslaught. . . . The fate of both peoples has now been thrown into the scales. . . . Not only in battle, but also when peace comes, official collaboration between both States will offer them an opportunity to devote their joint strength to the lasting maintenance of freedom. . . ."

It would be an understatement to say that Dutch Church leaders accepted this declaration of policy towards Russia; they had accepted it long before it was officially issued; they had made up their minds from the very first moment. But morally it strengthened their position enormously. Moreover, the position of the occupying authorities with regard to the Russian controversy, which they had vainly tried to provoke, had thoroughly weakened after the big German withdrawal in their first winter campaign; it had still further weakened as a consequence of the German catastrophe at Stalingrad. As in the United States and Britain, magnificent Russian achievements were the best Russian



propaganda in occupied countries. It happened more than once that a preacher bestowed thinly-veiled blessings upon the Russian allies, as when a Protestant minister opened his sermon on the morning after a great Russian victory with the words: "Lord, we thank Thee, for Thou hast dealt the devil another mighty blow on his wicked head."

Although Protestant and Catholic Church leaders were of the same mind with regard to Russia, the Germans' wrath turned with greater vehemence against the latter, of whom, perhaps, they had expected a more compromising attitude. In October *Volk en Vaderland* published a cartoon representing Mgr. de Jong, the Archbishop of Utrecht, crowning Joseph Stalin with a halo. This cartoon had been inspired by a long series of incidents, which culminated in a severe rebuff which the Germans had to accept from the Catholic authorities. They had cunningly attempted to "appease" Catholic opinion by offering the bishops the use of the German-controlled radio station of Hilversum for the broadcasting of Catholic services. Archbishop De Jong, however, declined to rescind his decision that no Catholics might co-operate with any so-called "Dutch" radio station, on the ground that such stations were regularly broadcasting attacks on Christian precepts and institutions.

Another incident which occurred a short time before, throws a startling light on the development of affairs. One day a Dutch National Socialist died of heart failure in the streets of the little border town of Broesbeek, near Nijmegen. The parish priest administered the Last Sacraments, but when he discovered that the dying man was a member of the banned National Socialist movement he declined to officiate at the burial service. The local "leader" thereupon tried to get a German priest from across the border to perform the ceremony, but in this he failed, in spite of the wholehearted co-operation of the German civil authorities. He was told that a German priest was quite willing to come, but that he could not officiate against the strict orders of the bishops.

Obviously he meant the German bishops who, in their own country, did not exclude Nazis from the sacraments and religious ceremonies, but forbade their priests to officiate outside the Reich, except as army chaplains, and in this quality exclusively for soldiers. It may be assumed that this ruling was made in order to prevent any infringement of the jurisdiction of the Dutch bishops by German priests, and this again may mean something more than that the German bishops wanted to respect this jurisdiction. Perhaps the latter acted on instructions from the Vatican,



but it is also possible that the German hierarchy, aware of the evil consequences of their own weakness in the last ten years, were only too willing to support the firm attitude of their brethren in Holland.

The bishops' refusal to allow Catholic services to be broadcast over the German-controlled Dutch network may have been a minor incident in itself, yet it was highly significant because it frustrated the last German hope to identify the Catholic Church with a Germanized propaganda organization. The Germans smarted under the rebuff and retaliated at once. They suppressed the Catholic "Pro Deo" movement, which aimed at the furtherance of deeper consciousness in religious life, and arrested the four principal leaders of the movement, including Mgr. F. N. J. Hendriks, Vicar General of the 's Hertogenbosch diocese, who was responsible for the distribution of leaflets denouncing Nazi principles as pagan and unChristian. When a few months later the aged bishop, Mgr. Diepen, died and was succeeded by his coadjutor, Mgr. W. P. A. Mutsaerts, the latter reappointed Mgr. Hendriks, who was still confined in a German concentration camp, as Vicar General. Father van Lierop, of the Catholic Press Agency, was sent to a prison in Berlin, the same prison where Dr. Hoeben, director of the Catholic Press Bureau at Breda, had died earlier in the year as a victim of ill-treatment, while Rector Roovackers, Director of the "Pro-Deo" movement, was interned in a concentration camp.

At the same time the Germans renewed their campaign against religious orders and missions, evicting them from their convents and mission houses. The professors and students of the large mission house of the St. Joseph's Society for Foreign Missions at Rosendaal, which is a preparatory college for Cardinal Vaughan's famous seminary at Mill Hill, near London, were forced to move to the Society's study house at Tilburg; the Sparrendal Mission at Vucht was requisitioned by the Germans; convents in Jutland, 's Hertogenbosch and Hilvarenbeek were evacuated; the priests of the Sacred Heart at Bergen-op-Zoom were ordered to leave their seminary; the Catholic Maris Stella Hospital at Scheveningen was ordered to be transferred to the east of the country.

When 1943 dawned, the course of world events was beginning to take a favourable turn. The ever-increasing strength of the United States increased the certainty that, long and hard as the struggle might be, the victory would finally be won by the United Nations; Russia had dealt a shattering blow to German pride



at Stalingrad; the victorious campaign of the British Eighth Army had eliminated the danger of an Axis breakthrough in the East; the Italians were giving unmistakable signs of demoralization and war-weariness; and in Germany, heavily bombarded throughout the second half of the year, morale was far from what it had been. In the first months of 1943 the Axis position had weakened to such a degree that invasion rumours assumed a far more realistic character than they had done in the year before. This stimulated the spirit of resistance all over occupied Europe. On the other hand, the Germans redoubled their precautionary measures, not only against the risk of invasion itself, but against the Dutch population who would certainly render all possible assistance to invading forces.

## X

## THE FIGHT AGAINST MORAL PERVERSION

THE relations between the Churches and the German authorities in the beginning of 1943 are perhaps best illustrated by copying a passage from an announcement, broadcast on January 30th over the Hilversum radio by Reich Commissioner Seyss-Inquart. He revealed on that occasion that the Churches had sent a letter, both to the commander of the German occupation army and to himself, to protest against death sentences which had recently been passed.

"I can only say," he commented, "that it is intolerable that organizations exist which are trying to endanger the safety of this territory in the rear of the men who are fighting in the east. We must be hard and are becoming harder. The Churches should understand the significance of our struggle. All denominations can fully practise their faith under Nazi occupation and are even able to express their viewpoints regarding measures of the occupier. I therefore believe that they are under the moral obligation at least not to hinder the German prosecution of the war."

It is, indeed, an obligation of the people of an enemy-occupied country not to hinder the prosecution of the war by the occupying power. It is an obligation, provided the occupying power lives up to its own recognized duties towards the nation which is temporarily under its authority. This condition not being fulfilled—and it never was by the Germans in any country which they occupied—there remains neither a legal nor a moral obligation which could in any way bind the population and its leaders. The mutual relations then will be dominated solely by violence, arbitrariness, and tyranny on the one side, and disobedience on



the other. Such is the situation in Holland as in all other occupied countries.

Moreover, the German interpretation of "prosecution of the war" is arbitrary to such a degree that every Dutchman who subscribed to it would find himself in the position of a traitor to his country and to the cause of the United Nations. The Germans do not interpret it in the military sense; it is not only prosecution of the war against their adversaries' military forces which, according to their conceptions, should not be hindered by the Church leaders in the occupied Netherlands. They should not do anything which might impede German warfare against the subjugated civilian population. They should not attempt to protect the people against injustice and persecution, against enlistment in the German armies, against deportation to Germany, against the destruction of their homes, the dispersion of their families, the corruption and disruption of their social life, the establishment of the German "New Order."

Seyss-Inquart's outburst on January 30th is a clear indication that he considered the Churches as the most effective influence which thwarted his attempts to reduce the people of Holland to the position of helots of the German empire, a testimony of which the Churches may be proud indeed. On January 14th the Archbishop of Canterbury paid them this tribute:

"That the Christian Churches are an active focus of resistance against Nazi tyranny has been conspicuously apparent in Norway and Holland. We salute the heroic Christian people, their leaders, followers, clergy, laity, and men and women who stood out in Christ's name against the doctrines and practices of the Nazi oppressors. Christians of Holland and France, at great risk to themselves and their churches, have condemned the treatment of Jews—not, as far as we have heard, the Christians of Germany."

When the Archbishop of Canterbury spoke these words, he could not foresee how far more arduous the task of the Christian Churches would become in the ensuing months. One of the great and vital issues in which they had to give leadership in the early part of 1943 concerned the German-sponsored Physicians Chamber. According to Dutch underground papers which reached London in January, membership of that Chamber, which had been made compulsory by the German authorities, was considered incompatible with the precepts of Christianity. Christian doctors found it impossible to join it because it was founded upon Nazi doctrines which interfered with the relationship between physician and patient, a relationship which Christian as well as professional



ethics demanded should be maintained. The practice, imposed by the Germans upon physicians, of diminishing the chances of life of the mentally afflicted, of killing them even, was considered to conflict with divine and natural law, and the same opinion was advanced with regard to sterilization. "The demand," it was said, "that Dutch doctors collaborate in measures to secure racial purity—for example by sterilizing fellow-citizens against their will—must be refused by Netherlands physicians on human, scientific, and religious grounds, because the demand originates in a creed which, in its definition of race, blood, and soil, must appear to doctors as the purest paganism." The underground paper concluded by saying that the ultimate reply of Dutch physicians to requests for collaboration with the Germans could only be: "We say no and we continue to say no all along the line."

That is what they did. "Rather than join the German-sponsored Physicians Chamber," it was reported in early spring, "doctors are giving up the title of physician, but continue to practice. As membership of the Chamber is obligatory for all who call themselves physicians, medical men in the town of Haarlem are covering the word on their nameplates with adhesive tape, a local paper stated."

All over the country physicians stubbornly refused to pollute their profession with the mire of Nazi philosophy, and betray the trust of their patients. "Nothing could change their attitude; they refused all co-operation," wrote a chronicler of events in occupied Holland. "And so, suddenly substituting force for the vain arguments and pleas they had employed in preceding months, the Germans rounded up hundreds of doctors. The prisoners were promptly sent to concentration camps and their properties confiscated. Immediately a large number of physicians went into hiding, and for the second time in a few weeks the nation's health services—including all surgical operations—came to a virtual standstill."

This defiant stand of the medical profession was vigorously supported by the Christian Churches in a joint statement condemning sterilization in these terms: "Sterilization means dishonouring the divine commandments as well as the rights of man; it is the ultimate consequence of an anti-Christian and destructive racial theory, of boundless self-overrating, which undermines true Christian and human life, and finally renders it impossible." In the midst of this great struggle, on June 3rd, the Dutch doctors gave further proof of their determination not to tolerate any German interference, by addressing a letter to Reich Commissioner Seyss-Inquart, in which they sounded a note of serious warning against the German policy of looting the country



of so considerable a part of its products as to expose the population to undernourishment and starvation.

"Although hundreds of Dutch pastors and lay readers are now held in concentration camps as hostages," the Religious News Service was informed about that time, "the religious life of the country is intense and is spreading. Owing to the presence of members of the clergy in the camps, more and more morning and evening services are taking place there, attracting not only members of the Church, but many who hitherto belonged to no denomination. Imprisonment, deportation, and hiding of thousands of Dutch youths have disorganized Christian youth movements, but there are bigger evangelical meetings for young men and women all over the country than before the war."

The quiet dignity with which the clergy of all denominations stood their ground in every conflict with the occupying power is brought into sharp relief by the hysterical abuse that was hurled at them by scurrilous papers in the pay of the Nazis. In May 1943, during the nation-wide upheaval which resulted from the German decision to re-intern some hundreds of thousands of Dutch ex-servicemen, the Dutch S.S. journal, *Storm*, demanded that the Dutch bishops be made liable to the death sentence for exhorting Dutch Catholics to resist the Germans.

"General Christiansen's decree of April 29th regarding the return of Dutchmen to prisoner-of-war camps was a ready excuse," the paper said, "for a number of criminal elements to proclaim a general strike. The strike was more intensive in the confessional districts than in the towns where priests have less influence. The strikers were mostly sheep of the Roman Catholic Church. Why have the bishops exhorted to resistance against the German occupation in all their pastoral letters? It would be ridiculous to answer: Because of Dutch interests. The Roman Catholic clergy and Dutch interests are as implacable enemies as fire and water. Just as they tried to cause unrest with hate-sowing pamphlets when anti-Jewish measures were taken, they exhorted to sabotage some Sundays ago, because Dutch labourers must give manpower for the fight against a world revolution of God-hating Bolshevism. They, the bishops, priests, and clergymen, are responsible, and the S.S. considers it no more than reasonable and logical that those who drive the Dutch workers against German rifles must be punished more than their victims. Professors and physicians who strike are no less punishable than labourers and farmers. We demand one punishment: the bullet for all those brutes serving the Jewish-Bolshevist cause."



## XI

## THE VOICE OF THE CHURCHES

A PASTORAL LETTER of the Dutch hierarchy and a Declaration of the Netherlands Reformed Churches were read simultaneously in all Catholic and Protestant churches on February 21, 1943. The text of the Pastoral Letter ran as follows:

“Beloved Faithful:

“The bitter suffering and anguished worry under whose weight so many are bent in consequence of the severe measures taken, especially in these recent times, by the occupation authorities, urge us to write to you and to convey our sentiments of common sympathy.

“We are filled with the deepest compassion for the numberless persons called upon to bear such great and bitter sufferings. But we would fail in our duty if we did not publicly raise our voice against the injustice to which so large a part of our people is being subjected. In this we are following the path indicated by our Holy Father, the Pope, who in his latest Christmas message declared among other things:

“The Church would be untrue to herself, and cease to be a Mother, if she turned a deaf ear to her children’s anguished cries, which reach her from every class of the human family. She does not intend to take sides for or against either of the particular forms in which the several peoples and States strive to solve the gigantic problems of domestic order or international collaboration, as long as these forms conform to the Law of God. But on the other hand, as the ‘Pillar and Foundation of Truth’ and guardian, by the will of God and the mandate of Christ, of the natural and supernatural order, the Church cannot renounce her right to proclaim to her sons and to the whole world the unchanging basic laws, in order to save them from every perversion, obfuscation, corruption, false interpretation, and error.

“Therefore, with other important Church groups, we have directed to the Reich Commissioner the following letter:

“‘The Protestant Churches and the Roman Catholic Church in Holland feel compelled to write once more to you, Herr Reich Commissioner, with profound seriousness. On many occasions they have directed to you grave complaints against the mounting injustice with which the Dutch



people are being treated, which is a matter that also profoundly affects the Churches themselves.

“As they told you, they have, by the mission imposed upon them in the name of Christ, made their voice heard also in defence of principles which constitute the foundations of the public Christian life of our people; namely, Justice, Mercy, and Liberty in their relation to human life.

“They must bear witness to the fact that the heads of Governments, too, are subject to the Law of God, and have the obligation of abstaining from acts that are prohibited by that Law. The Churches would fail in that responsibility if they neglected to admonish the heads of Governments for the sins committed by them in the exercise of their power or neglected to forewarn them by reminding them of the severity of the judgment of God.

“The Churches have denounced before the increasing lack of justice; the persecution and execution of Jewish fellow-citizens; the imposition of a conception of life and of the world that is contradictory to the Gospel of Jesus Christ; forced labour service as an institution of National Socialist education; the violation of the freedom of Christian instruction; the imposition of forced labour in Germany on Dutch workers; the execution of hostages; the arrest and imprisonment of persons, among them ecclesiastical dignitaries, under such conditions that a very considerable number have already made the sacrifice of their lives in concentration camps.

“Now, to all this, is added the hunting down, as if they were slaves, the arrest and deportation of thousands of young people.

“In all these actions the Divine Law has been violated in increasing measure.

“The Churches preach against hate and the spirit of vengeance in the hearts of our people, and raise their voice against manifestations of these vices. According to the Word of God no one can be his own judge. But in the same measure the Churches also have the duty, by their calling, to preach this word of God: “Obey God rather than men.” This serves as the ruling in all conflicts of conscience, even in those arising from the measures in question. By virtue of Divine Law no one may offer the slightest collaboration in acts of injustice because, in so doing, he shares the guilt of the injustice itself.



“Herr Reich Commissioner, it is in obedience to the Lord that the Churches are obliged to address this letter to you; they pray that God may lead you in His way, that you may restore the right so grievously violated in the exercise of your power.’

“Thus ends our collective letter to the Reich Commissioner.

“Beloved faithful, in the midst of all the injustices and anguish you have suffered, our sympathy goes out in a very special manner to the young, forcibly taken from their homes, to the Jews, and to our brethren in the Catholic faith who are of Jewish descent and who are exposed to so great suffering. Furthermore, we are profoundly grieved by the fact that, for the execution of the measures taken against these two categories of persons, the collaboration of our own fellow-citizens, such as those in public authority, State employees, and directors of institutions, has been demanded.

“Beloved Brethren, we are aware in how serious a conflict the consciences of the persons concerned find themselves involved. Therefore, to remove any doubt and uncertainty you may entertain on this point, we declare most emphatically that collaboration in this matter is forbidden by conscience. If refusal to collaborate should demand sacrifice from you, be strong and constant in the conviction that you are doing your duty before God and man.

“Beloved Brethren, we have no physical force at our disposal. All the more, therefore, we exhort you to have recourse to that instrument which, everything considered, is infallible, the fervent prayer that God may hasten to take pity on us and on the world.”

This joint pastoral, signed by the Most Rev. Johan de Jong, Archbishop of Utrecht, the Most Rev. Peter Adriaan Willem Hopmans, Bishop of Breda; the Most Rev. Willem Lemmens, Bishop of Roermond; the Most Rev. Johan Peter Huibers, Bishop of Haarlem, and Bishop Mussaerts, Coadjutor of 's Hertogenbosch, was issued at Utrecht on February 17, 1943.

The Declaration issued at the same time by the Reformed Churches read as follows:

“Events of the last weeks have compelled the Churches to speak to their congregations. It is the task of the Church to raise its voice in protest even in public matters when principles rooted in the Gospel are violated. The Church therefore repeatedly lodged serious complaints with the occupying power regarding measures that constituted specific violations of the principles on



which the Christian life of the Netherlands people is based, namely justice, charity, and freedom of conscience.

"The Church would be neglecting its duty if it failed to impress on the authorities that they too are subject to Divine Law. It therefore drew the attention of the occupying power to increasing lawlessness, to the persecution unto death of Jewish fellow citizens, to the fact that an outlook flagrantly violating the Gospel of Christ is forced on the people, to the compulsory labour service as a Nazi educational institution, to forced labour of Netherlands workers in Germany, to the killing of hostages and the imprisonment of numerous Netherlands subjects, including Church dignitaries, so that an alarming number have already lost their lives in concentration camps.

"In view of the latest developments, the Church now raises its voice against the acts of hunting, rounding up, and carrying off thousands of youths.

"On the other hand, the Church feels bound to issue an emphatic warning against hatred and feelings of revenge in the hearts of the Netherlands people. According to the Word of God, no one may take the law in his own hands.

"It is also the Church's duty to preach the Word of God, since 'God must be obeyed above men.' This word is a guide in all conflicts of conscience, including those created by measures now being taken. It forbids co-operation in unjust deeds. Co-operation renders the participant an accomplice to injustice.

"The Churches desire to bring these matters again to the notice of the Reich Commissioner.

"They pray God that the occupying power and the Netherlands people may find the way to justice and to obedience to His Word."

Then followed the joint letter of the Catholic and Protestant Churches to the Reich Commissioner, whereupon the statement concluded:

"It is in obedience to the Divine Master that the Churches must speak to you. They pray God that He may lead you into His way and may redress the flagrant injustice committed in the exercise of power."

These pronouncements made a profound impression throughout the country. The unanimous refusal of the students to sign the required "declaration of obedience" to the occupation authorities, was undoubtedly prompted by this dignified and noble protest.

The Germans found no better way of striking back at the Churches than by closing the Calvinist, Catholic, and other denominational universities.



When in May, General Christiansen's decree of April 29th regarding the re-arrest of ex-servicemen caused a general strike and nation-wide revolt, which the Germans suppressed in their habitual ruthless way, the bishops issued a new letter to the clergy and the faithful, in which they reiterated their protest against the insupportable tyranny of the German invaders :

"Increasingly hard trials are imposed upon our country. A world conception, in flat contradiction to Christianity, has been imposed upon our people in the course of these last three years. In all spheres Nazism seeks to extend its influence and to establish its control. Although Nazism remains the powerful master of the situation here, the spiritual power of resistance by the overwhelming majority of the people of the Netherlands remains unbroken. This fills us with great consolation and with faith in the future. . . . The people of the Netherlands will never turn Nazi, provided we remain true to the faith of our fathers. There is strength only in faith. Yet, dear brethren, though our faith makes us fearless, we are full of deep anxiety and compassion in view of the calamities which have stricken our people and because of the even worse calamities with which they are threatened. We do not even think of the privations which many of you have got to suffer, and which in certain cases threaten to assume the nature of profound misery. Worse is the suffering entailed by deportation and forced labour abroad. Many families have been broken up and are thereby suffering spiritual distress. Tens of thousands are exposed to many dangers. Many people who, after years of effort, had established their own enterprises, are now threatened with destruction and see the joy of life departed from them.

"Now the limit has been reached. All able-bodied men who are available will be deported, a deportation on a scale such as the Christian world has never known. To find something comparable one has to go back to the time of the Babylonian captivity, when God's people were taken into exile, which moved the prophet Jeremiah to exclaim : 'A voice has been heard on the heights ; a voice of lamentation, of mourning and of tears, which is the voice of Rachel, weeping for her children' (Jeremiah xxxi. 15).

"What revolts us is not only the deportation itself, but also the horrible injustice, contrary to all human and divine laws. As shepherds of your souls we cannot keep silent on what is done to our people. Posterity would stigmatize us with eternal shame if we witnessed this injustice in silence. It is the task of the bishops to defend justice and to condemn evil as such ; if not, they would forsake their duty.



"If ever there was a nation which did not want war, it was the Dutch nation. We were not prepared; we only defended our country when it was attacked. We had to do it because it was our duty and because our country is dear to us. It may be small, but the love which we bear it is as great as the love which other nations feel for their countries. To-day our country is not only usurped but a large part of its population has been carried away by force. Our men are forced to work for their enemy.

"At first it was said that Dutchmen had to work abroad because here there was neither work nor bread for them. To-day—as has been explicitly stated—they must work for Germany in order to assure a German victory. This is where our conscience is aroused. According to the fourth commandment we must honour and love our country and be ready to make sacrifices for it. To-day we may not do anything for our country, we are even compelled under the threat of heavy penalties to assist the enemy.

"This is where the injustice lies against which we raise our voice. Although we are told that it is the duty of all Christians to fight Bolshevism, this is only a trap. Whoever really wishes to fight 'atheistic Bolshevism,' so severely condemned by the Pope, should not suppress Christianity by all possible means, as is being done by Nazism which, it is true, does not persecute it in a bloody way, but throttles its vitality. Nazis in power do not even hesitate to prevent the Church from caring for the souls of her own children."

It was revealed in this letter that when even larger numbers of Dutchmen were sent to work in Germany, "endless negotiations" took place with the competent authorities for permission to have them accompanied abroad by Dutch priests. It was all in vain.

"No, dearly beloved brethren," the letter continued, "the only means to fight Communism is not Nazism but Christianity," and it concluded by exhorting the faithful to pray "as we should pray in these terrible times."

The same day the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church issued an energetic protest on the same lines. The wording is not in our possession, but it may be assumed that it contained the same charges against the enemy as the Roman Catholic document. Some of the more moderate papers made feeble attempts to reconcile Nazi doctrines with the teachings of the latter. The *Amsterdam Algemeen Handelsblad*, in its issue of May 17th, described the relationship between Christianity and Nazism as follows:

"Not only outsiders, but also members of the National Socialist



Movement, are asking themselves what is in principle the relationship between Christianity and National Socialism. This question is a sensible one. Priests and ministers are not making things easier for the National Socialists. Not only have many churchmen taken measures opposing the National Socialist movements, measures which stamp the Nazis as second-rate Christians, but their sermons and pastoral letters resemble crypto-political propaganda rather than pure preaching of the Gospel. . . . Some members of the National Socialist Movement, however, fail to make a distinction between the Church as an assembly of fallible leaders and parishioners, whose conduct should be freely criticized, and the Church as a teacher of Christian principles. To them we wish to make it clear that the official viewpoint should be taken as guidance, rather than the individual viewpoint of members. This official principle has been laid down in the initial programme of the National Socialist Movement and declares that the movement as such accepts the viewpoint of positive Christianity without committing itself to any particular doctrine. This proves sufficiently that National Socialism does not oppose Christianity but, on the contrary, protects its principles."

Again it should be clearly understood that the real issue was not whether National Socialism could possibly be reconciled with religion or with the religious spirit of the Dutch. On this matter ecclesiastical leaders in Holland had made their unambiguous pronouncements long before the Germans invaded the country, and even apart from this it never occurred to the broad masses of the population to accept this newest Germanic creed. What *Algemeen Handelsblad* really meant was that the Christian convictions of the Dutch people need not prevent them from submitting to the enemy's political and social system; that they could go on being devout Christians, provided they submitted entirely to German domination and all its tyrannical injustice.

An answer to this argument could be found in a letter which the local division of the Calvinist Church of Utrecht addressed to other divisions, and which was published in an underground newspaper that reached London a short time afterwards. In this letter the Utrecht group emphasized that it was the duty of all Christian Churches to resist, with all possible means, the suppression of Holland's people.

"The aims of the aggressive powers are positively anti-Christian," the letter read. "The Spirit of Darkness is attempting to take possession of the world. Divine rule is derided. Justice is trampled upon. Conscience is overruled. Hell appears to be let



loose. With fanatical passion and satanic consistency attempts are being made to accomplish the last of the National Socialist aims. . . . Our Christian conscience compels us to resist the tyranny of those trampling upon Christ's doctrine."

The common stand which the Churches of Holland are taking against the cruel injustice and anti-Christian activities of the German invaders may have a lasting effect upon the whole ecclesiastical position in the Netherlands. Not only have the Churches to a larger extent than ever before become the moral and spiritual rallying point of the majority of the population, but their leaders have become aware of many serious mistakes in leadership which have characterized the past, and which in many cases weakened the Churches' appeal to the masses. Worst of all, the various Christian communities had allowed themselves to become separated from each other by their differences, instead of being united by the Christian ideals held in common.

All this has completely changed. "During the years of German occupation the various Churches have learned the decisive value of common consultation. We must not cherish the illusion that after the war the problem of ecclesiastic disunion will suddenly be solved. It would be dangerous to strive for unity of the Churches merely for the sake of reflecting our growing national unity. Church unity must be based on motives rooted in the very nature of the Church. But each Church has the duty to contribute, to the utmost of its power, to the fulfilment of the ideal of unity."

These sentiments were expressed in the Dutch underground paper *Vrij Nederland*, which usually puts forward the views of Protestant churchmen. The writer added:

"The past years have taught the significance of co-operation and consultation. What no one had believed possible has happened. The Catholic and practically all Protestant Churches have found each other at the decisive moment. Again and again they have drawn up their protests together or issued their messages to the people after previous consultation. This is an important promise for the future. The Churches must get accustomed to this sort of collaboration, locally and nationally.

"The time of living apart must irrevocably belong to the past.

"The Churches will need a deep insight into their vocation with regard to life itself and to the nation. One of the many miracles of these years is the discovery made by so many: that the Church is the conscience of the Nation."

THE END

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